

THE TULADHARS OF KATHMANDU  
A STUDY OF BUDDHIST TRADITION IN A NEWAR MERCHANT COMMUNITY

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## ABSTRACT

### THE TULADHARS OF KATHMANDU: A STUDY OF BUDDHIST TRADITION IN A NEWAR MERCHANT COMMUNITY

Todd Thornton Lewis

This is an ethnographic study of the Tuladhars, Newar merchants of Asan Tol, Kathmandu, and an analysis of Buddhist tradition in their community. Its basic endeavor is to describe the complex configuration of Buddhist observance in Kathmandu, analyze Newar religious tradition in historical perspective, and explore the impact of modern change in this cultural context. This dissertation follows in the scholarly lineages of historical anthropology as defined by Evans-Pritchard, the study of tradition by Edward Shils, and the anthropology of Buddhist societies as articulated by S.J. Tambiah.

In the ethnographic treatment constituting Part I, the religious geography of the Kathmandu Valley is described, from the furthest limits of pilgrimage down to the topography of town, neighborhood, and

house. A portrait of the social setting in Asan Tol and the social organization of the Tuladhar caste is then drawn to define the bazaar community in which the research was conducted. Special attention is then devoted to Buddhist ritual traditions: daily ritual cycles, rites performed by Vajracarya priests, meditations and initiation, bratas, and the life-cycle rites. A description of the yearly festivals completes the ethnographic documentation.

In Part II are described the distinctive characteristics of "Baha Buddhism," a term used to denote the unique organization of Newar Buddhism that culminated in the later Malla Dynasty (1500-1769). Baha Buddhism survives to the present day in fractured form, although its traditions still provide the central framework for contemporary Tuladhar observance. In this analysis, close attention is paid to the organization of Newar viharas, patterns of exchange and hierarchy between Vajracaryas and the lay community, and the specific content of this distinctive Mahayana-Vajrayana Buddhist tradition. In this section, the nature of Hindu - Buddhist relations in Newar society is also delineated.

The dissertation ends in Part III with a treatment of socio-cultural change in the modern period. To define the full religious context of Kathmandu Valley Buddhism, the role of Tibetan and Theravada traditions and their impact on Tuladhar practice and belief are examined. Finally, there is a discussion of the effects of modern change in political rule, economics, media, and competing ideologies as they have affected the organization of Baha Buddhism and the religious orientation of individual Tuladhars.



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To My Father Thornton Lewis



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Through the process of anthropological fieldwork and writing, one comes to recognize that constructing an ethnographic portrait of a community is a very personal process, one that involves a network of contacts and relationships centered in the researcher's own life. To use the language of Buddhist friends in Kathmandu, the karma (actions) and vidya (knowledge) of many individuals have been merged with my own in this dissertation. Just as I assume sole responsibility for the content of this study, I would like to acknowledge all who were instrumental to its completion.

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Todd T. Lewis

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#### A NOTE AND LANGUAGE AND TRANSLITERATION

To date, there has been no authoritative Newari-English dictionary produced, nor is there an established formula for transliterating Newari into English. Therefore, I have adopted the convention of using colloquial Newari spelling forms at times and at other times, the pronounced forms for I feel that this is better than artificially "Sanskritizing" the terms. When transliterating Sanskrit terms, I have generally followed the system adopted in the second edition of Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English dictionary.

**CHAPTER I**  
**Introduction to the Study:**  
**Religious Tradition, Buddhism and Society**  
**Research Setting, and Organization**

This is an ethnographic study of religion and cultural change among the Tuladhars, a caste community of Buddhist merchants in Kathmandu, Nepal. Its goal is to document the Tuladhar Buddhist tradition, analyze the unique social and cultural systems of the community, and describe their relationship with the wider culture of Nepal.

This study was undertaken as a religious ethnography that would lay the foundations for the anthropological study of urban Newar society where the least studied Buddhist community in the modern world exists.

"Religious tradition" is a central concern in this inquiry and we will examine the many areas in which it affects Newar life. As the primary source of a community's values and collective consciousness, religious tradition is a fundamental constituent of culture, that body of ideas and practices that define a distinctive lifestyle which is passed on to each new generation (Kroeber 1948: 61; Murphy 1978: 22). "Tradition" is the cumulative inheritance evolving from a society's cultural past (Smith 1964: 139; Shils 1981: 12). It is repositied in material objects, channels a society's energies, supplies an agenda for the passing of time, and provides individuals with fundamental models for thought and action.

A great religious tradition such as Buddhism has elaborately developed expertise in building interlocking systems of ritual,

custom, festival life, and architecture that reflect a fundamental world view and constitutes a powerful self-reinforcing and perpetuating cultural force (Geertz 1968: 97). The major religions have survived through the centuries due to their ability to knit enduring interactions between every societal level-- spiritual masters and specialists with patrons, kings, and polity.

Traditions in history evolve through a continual dialectic with common-sense social reality (Geertz 1968: 93). Their institutions and agents therefore are always engaged in rebuilding literal and metaphorical "edifices" in human life. In addition to promulgating its distinctive world view and ethos (ibid: 97), a religious tradition supports models of social order and seeks its accomodation within it. Its leaders must synthesize the historical present, politically and economically, with reference to these norms.

Thus, a religious tradition is an ongoing enterprise constituted of systems of social and cultural synthesis. To understand Buddhism in a given society, we must analyze how its cultural and social systems maintain plausibility and legitimacy. In urban Kathmandu, where two major religious traditions, Hindu and Buddhist, have coexisted for millenia and modern changes have had a major impact, this study's emphasis on a dynamic model of religion in society is extremely important in our attempt to describe the perpetuation of Buddhist tradition there.

The dissertation follows the methodology of "historical

anthropology"<sup>1</sup> in attempting to reconstruct the evolution of Newar Buddhism over the past four centuries and theoretical standpoint on the anthropology of religion represented by Geertz. As he says,

The aim of the comparative study of religion is...: the description of a wide variety of forms in which it appears; the uncovering of forces which bring these into existence, alter them, or destroy them; and the assessment of their influences, also various, upon the behavior of men in everyday life (1971).

In this study, we pursued both textual and contextual approaches to Newar religion, since neither alone would yield an accurate understanding of the Tuladhars. Given the vast Newar textual heritage from Indian Buddhism, the mere existence of a particular text in Kathmandu does not necessarily indicate its importance nor that there are adherents to its philosophical view. Alternatively, it is impossible to understand a Vajrayana ritual by observation alone. Without recourse to the relevant texts, its many levels of meaning are not discovered. Therefore, as religious tradition is defined by the relationships that exist between textual viewpoints and contextual practices (Singer 1972: 49), so our study had to move between these two poles.

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<sup>1</sup>As defined by Evans-Pritchard, this sub-discipline has a clearly defined research methodology:

The student of historical traditions has a triple role to play: recorder, historian, and sociologist. He records a people's traditions, assesses their historical validity, and gives a time notation... and finally he makes a sociological interpretation of them (1961: 7).



### Buddhism and Society: Basic Notions and Patterns

Wherever Buddhism became an established religious movement, it supported a religiously grounded system of exchange between its monks and lay society. This dialectic of exchange is responsible for maintaining the institutions that, in turn, perpetuate Buddhism's presence in society.

This pattern is rooted in the earliest teachings. On the most rudimentary doctrinal level, laymen have been taught to seek merit (punya) to enhance their store of good karma. This affects their destiny in the present and in future lifetimes so that eventually they can attain a rebirth in which they will attain release from samsāra, the world of rebirth and redeath. The earliest tradition also polemicized in favor of its own masters being the most fruitful "field of merit" for laymen: gifts to Buddhas, Arahats, and bhiksus yielded the maximum return in punya to the giver as compared to other spiritual masters. Although with the full emergence of the Mahayana/Vajrayana tradition there were far-reaching changes in the understanding of nirvana, the belief that karma conditions advancement toward enlightenment remained a continuity throughout Buddhist history. The Mahayana movement likewise emphasized dāna ("giving") as the first pāramitā ("perfection") in spiritual advancement and argued that the Bodhisattvas were a superior "field of merit" in contrast to individuals at (in their view) lower stages of Buddhist spiritual attainment (such as the Hinayanist Arahat). Thus, the lay need for punya remained a constant fact which helps explain, in part, the great similarity of lay practice across the Buddhist world.

Merit making leads laymen to do things that support and reaffirm

Buddhist tradition. The most important activity in which the ordinary laymen can engage in is dāna. Giving can take many forms and have many different foci: to ritualists for performing ceremonies, to pandits to recite texts and compose treatises, to artisans for the purpose of erecting temples and manufacturing images. In a very material sense, the ongoing exchanges that define Buddhism as tradition in society are based on the layman's need to make punya. If laymen can give generously, pandits can study the ancient texts to complete their philosophical learning and increase their ritual competence; artisans can practice their crafts, erecting new edifices and repairing old ones; artists can create vital religious art; and a whole range of cultural performances can be supported. With adequate resources, the physical, festival, ritual, protective, and ideological dimensions of Buddhist tradition can survive through time and across generations.

Wherever Buddhists missionized, they made their claim of spiritual superiority. Famous Buddhist saints converted the nāgas or yakshas of new territory (e.g. Falk 1973: 13) , defeated competing ritualists in duels of magic (e.g. Paul 1976:148) , and incorporated local practices into its hierarchy of disciplines (Nakamura 1969; Lehman 1971). On another level, the rationality of this Buddhist "spiritual accounting" was doubtless one aspect of its attractiveness to elites (such as merchant classes) who sought an alternative to the established practitioners and their high status supporters.<sup>1</sup>

In every case where Buddhist tradition took root, it had an Throughout the history of monastic Buddhism, the vihāra was a

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<sup>1</sup>This was the manner in which Buddhist institutions could thereby enter into the realm of local power struggles and expressions of status, the paradigmatic case being the early history of Tibet.

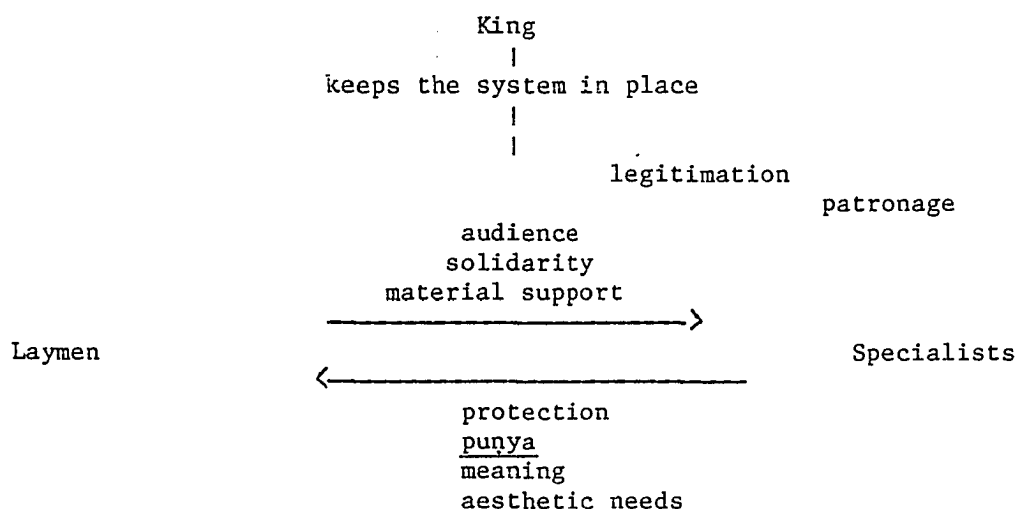
institutional center, the sangha, led by a small elite of highly accomplished teachers, meditation masters, and ritualists. These accomplished men shaped the ongoing expressions of tradition in society. It was primarily through monastic institutions (vihāra) which unified these components and channeled patronage that Buddhist tradition missionized and established itself across Asia.

Throughout the history of Indian Buddhism, the vihāra was a complex institution, reflecting the diversity within the local society. Monastic life unified an unusually broad spectrum of individuals who were attracted to a large institutional program of activities. For this reason, we cannot equate all monks with Buddhist masters since the "virtuosi" (Weber 1958) comprised only a small minority in the vihara communities. When Buddhism flourished within a cultural area, institutional hierarchies existed that linked the remote areas to the great centers of study and training. There were progressive stages involved for those seeking higher levels of accomplishment in meditation, scholarship, and ritual performance (Dutt 1962). In modern Theravada countries and in the Tibetan context, the great majority of monks are not masters but live on a level of understanding and practice only marginally above that of the laity (see, e.g. Tambiah 1970; Gombrich 1971). Guided by the superiors in the sangha, these lesser figures maintain the cultic practices and doctrinal interpretations as best they can for the lay society.

In Buddhist society, laymen's giving translates into the continual material support and affirmation of institutions that, in turn, maintain Buddhist culture. As depicted in Figure I-1, these have physical, intellectual, aesthetic, and protective, dimensions. All of

these are expressed through the cultural media that define the Buddhist tradition (Singer 1972: 47). If sound, this dialectic of exchange operates to motivate laymen to give in many ways and this circular process of reasserting and re-establishing plausibility continues. Thus, "Buddhist dominance" in a society can be defined by the exclusivity its elite commands in the receipt of dāna. On the most basic level, then, it is possible to define the state of a Buddhist tradition's health by the lay community's ability to feed its specialists and renew its physical structures.

**Figure I-1: Patterns of Exchange in Buddhist Societies**



There is internal complexity in the lay polity that shapes the ongoing expressions of tradition. As is true in all religious traditions, the wealthiest laymen are leaders in maintaining the highest expressions of tradition among the specialists. Of course, one key figure in this wealthy lay elite is the king. Other wealthy

supporters contribute a disproportionately large amount of Buddhist patronage so that, as Obeyesekere has pointed out, the traditional observances ordering dāna exchanges create a redistributational system between non-kin groups in Buddhist society (Obeyesekere 1982).

The highest class among laymen plays a major role in the transmission of religious tradition through its material contribution and as a reference group for imitation in the wider lay polity. The standards of the affluent likewise provide a model for group activities, processions, and patronage. Finally, this elite seems to have been highly represented among the spiritual elite in the sangha.<sup>1</sup>

The most viable type of Buddhist dāna was the gift of monastery buildings and lands dedicated to the upkeep of the sangha. A landed endowment represented the most secure long-term resource for the maintenance of tradition, tying it to the productive base of society. It is not surprising that from the earliest days of Buddhism, this was a highly praised gift (Amore 1972). Acquiring land endowment support was a decisive step in Buddhist missionizing and for integrating Buddhist institutions into the socio-economic life of the society. Over generations, however, this entry into the "local establishment" of an area also meant that Buddhist institutions became landlords and could be corrupted by other dominant groups. According to the classical texts, the remedy for this tendency was the king, as it was his duty to insure that the Sangha and its monasteries were properly administered (Tambiah 1978: 113).

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<sup>1</sup>There is strong evidence that the early Indian Buddhist sangha was composed predominantly of the wealthy upper strata of society (Gokhale 1965: 395).

### Buddhism and Political Rule

The relationship between the centers of political power and Buddhist establishments was a crucial one. As the layman of the highest standing and the guarantor of his kingdom's social order, the king has occupied a celebrated role in the Buddhist texts from the earliest days (Tambiah 1976: 32ff). Royal donations could be lavish and a king's interest in the Sangha must have been a prestigious aid to monastic recruitment. If the country's socio-economic life was ruled in ways sympathetic to Buddhist institutions, the tradition would flourish. Early Buddhist thinkers developed theories of kingship (Gokhale 1969; Reynolds 1972) and Sangha-state relations (Gokhale 1969) that allowed the vihāra to legitimize a ruler's claim to power. By doing so, the Buddhist movement also claimed its own spiritual autonomy:

Buddhists also put forward the theory of "two wheels", two distinct realms of action ... of a cakkavartin, the leader of the temporal realm and the Bodhisattva, pre-eminent in the spiritual domain. These ideas were also carried on in the Tibetan tradition (Snellgrove 1959) .

In order to avoid displeasing the political rulers, the Buddhists also molded their rules to exclude individuals who could lead the vihāra into a conflict with the state (i.e. deserters, criminals, undesirables). Thus, both ideological legitimation and Buddhist policies of social accommodation made the tradition very adaptable.

To gain ideological preeminence, karma doctrine was invoked. Although history has shown that Buddhist doctrine has been tolerant of other religious traditions, it has been forthright in maintaining the claim that Buddhist masters and the sangha are superior to all others

by virtue of their mastery of karmic law. As Mus points out, this religious stance was a fundamental aspect of Buddhist tradition, constituting one mechanism of Buddhism's "colonization" of other societies:

A decisive feature of the process by which Buddhism ... adjusted to the various religions it met all over Central and Eastern Asia, was to endorse, practically, their cosmology and eschatology insofar as the royal and imperial cults they ritually backed rested on both. Buddhism, however, at a higher level of understanding and revelation, maintained its final supremacy. By a bold move, ... it recognized ... the operative validity of these ... systems, yet subordinating this acceptance to a much broader view of the world, as the result of the impersonal and inexorable law of Retribution [karma], building gods and figureheads and side issues in its huge mechanism ...likewise ...traditional images of the world, whether Hindu, Confucian, or Taoist, or those connected with folklore and ancestor worship, are preserved, but at what we would call the phenomenal level (Mus 1967-68: 99).

Buddhism prospered when it enjoyed patronage and conferred legitimacy on political rulers. The converse case was also true: if the king refused to enforce customary laws on monastery-endowed lands, or limited the activities of monks, or withdrew his support or participation from festival performances, the tradition would suffer as the complex dialectics of religious plausibility and social viability would start to unravel. A new king, for example, could lavish support on other religious groups.

The relationship between the vihāra and the center(s) of political power became crucial to the tradition's survival. In many ways, the history of Buddhism in Asian societies is the outcome of the ruling powers' interactions with Buddhist institutions. Whenever the vihāras lost their standing, the tradition's material dependencies and

social vulnerability were exposed. Without the State's enforcing the sangha's prerogatives, the material foundations of Buddhist tradition can crumble quickly, a fact illustrated repeatedly in the history of Buddhism in India and Central Asia. Unless, as in Tibet, Buddhist institutions become the state, merging the "two wheels," the monastery-dominated Buddhist tradition without state support is a fragile entity. (The Tibetan solution, as we know, also does not guarantee perpetuity.)

For most of its history in India and Nepal, Buddhist tradition survived in a polity ruled by kings following Brahmanical notions of kingship, not the Cakravartin-Dharmaraja notions of its textual heritage. It existed as one among many other religious orders that Kings certainly did patronize, but not exclusively or with the pattern of Buddhist dominance that Mus refers to. Over time, this ultimately constituted a serious weakness that affected the tradition's survival when hard times (climatic) or discriminatory political practices affected Buddhist institutions. The case of Newar "Baha Buddhism" which we describe in this study shows that the tradition had to adapt itself to a Brahmanical society, a trend that reduced its ability to maintain its textually-defined hierarchies and classical ideological distinctiveness.

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### Buddhism and Trade

Among the first converts, as patrons, and as bearers of Indian culture on the trade routes to Central Asia, merchants have been central figures, alongside monks and kings, in the history of



Buddhism (Kosambi 1972; Gokhale 1977). The merchant's perspective was a key factor in Buddhism's successful rapprochement with the world since the Buddhist movement prospered where trade networks were expanding in India: in cities and on trade routes (Gokhale 1965: 394; Ling 1973).<sup>1</sup>

Buddhist monks and merchants literally traveled together in extending Indian culture beyond its political limits on the subcontinent. It was widespread practice that organized merchant groups did business with monastery funds, paying interest to engage the considerable capital the monasteries accumulated (Rhys-Davids 1901: 870). With this, they plied the trade routes and made their living (Kosambi 1965: 182). This relationship between traders and the sangha seems to have been a synergism fundamental to the first millenium of Indian Buddhism, and, thereafter one key factor in the success of the tradition's survival elsewhere. Buddhism flourished in India until the post-Gupta feudal order began to undermine long-distance trade and the standing of the merchant castes such trade supported (Kosambi 1965: 185).

These patterns seem to have been mirrored in the history of the Kathmandu Valley. According to the earliest records, Buddhist monasteries functioned as delegated authorities for the royal governments in their regions, handling revenues and civil law (Riccardi 1979: 271). Caravan traders in Nepal are also mentioned in the inscriptions (ibid. : 266) and in texts (Levi 1908-III: 181ff).

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<sup>1</sup>It is likely that the wealthy who took ordination helped build enduring institutions and introduced refined aesthetic standards to Because its agriculturalists could produce sufficient surplus food, Buddhist art and architecture.

the Valley civilisation could afford specialist classes such as artisans and merchants. The latter exploited the Valley's position on the trade routes from India to Tibet and had a major role in patronizing the former. The great cultural traditions in literary arts, religious architecture, metalwork, and wood carving attests to the presence of an affluent class of patrons. This upper class wealth also meant that Newar culture could afford the luxury of continually Indianizing its traditions. Importing Buddhist and Hindu specialists from India (and, later, Tibet) as well as sending their own masters south required considerable financial investment from the society.<sup>1</sup> Thus, it is likely that Buddhist tradition survived in Kathmandu because trade remained a major economic factor for the Newars.

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### An Overview of Newar Society

The forces at work in the history of the Kathmandu Valley have fostered many divisions between castes, classes, and localities. Each former kingdom (see Chapter II) still speaks its own dialect of Newari, a Tibeto-Burman language. There is also considerable variation due to caste identity just as cultural practices vary greatly along these lines. As a result, even religious festivals are often observed in considerably different form across the Kathmandu Valley.

The social and cultural inter-relations between the cities today are quite few. Tuladhars, for example, do not marry outside of

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<sup>1</sup>The image of "buying" Indian culture is exactly correct in the case of Vajrayana Buddhist initiations conferred by Indian masters. The most celebrated cases are recorded in the Tibetan tradition (Snellgrove and Richardson 1968).

Kathmandu, although similiar Buddhist merchant castes exist in Patan and Bhaktapur. Today, a common language, the pan-Newar calendar, and shared general conventions in ritual practice and belief give Newars a common cultural foundation distinct from other groups. But most of the dynamics in social life emphasize in-group/out-group exclusiveness and encourage the growth of factions. Newars themselves point to their fractured community as one of the chief characteristics of their society.

Newar social life is constructed of a complex web of affiliations. There are multiple loyalties to city, neighborhood, caste, and family. Group loyalty and intra-group individual competition are regular aspects of life in a Newar community (Rosser 1966: 90).

Newars have an elaborate caste system that reflects the Valley's diversity and conditions most social interactions. Its hierarchy extends from Brahmins to untouchables and is divided into Hindu and Buddhist components (*ibid.*: 85-86). As Rosser points out, there are two divisions in the conceptual order: "...the first into two blocks of castes, ju pin ("[water] acceptable ones", i.e. "touchables") and maju pin ("[water] unacceptable ones", i.e. "untouchables") the one collectively dominant, the other collectively subordinate. Each of these blocks is further subdivided into a separate and internal hierarchy (*ibid.*: 88)." This may be represented in the following diagram:

**FIGURE I-2: OVERVIEW OF THE NEWAR CASTE HIERARCHY**

	<u>Hindu</u>		<u>Buddhist</u>	
	Deo Brahmin			
	Bhatta Brahmin			
	Karmacarya		Vajracarya	
<u>JU PIN</u>	Jha Brahmin		Sakya	
	Shrestha		Uray	(= Tuladhar
		Jyapu		Kansakar
				Tamrakar
				Sthapit
				Silpakar
	Kuma	Khusa		Awa
				MariKarmi
	Nau	Kau	Gathu	Manandhar
				("Saymi")
				Chitrakar
				("Pun")
	_____ "waterline" _____			
<u>MAJUPIN</u>	Jogi	Nay	Kulu	
		Pore		
	Chamkala	Halahulu		

Reserving further presentation for Chapter IV, we must note here that in integrating itself within a caste-dominated society, Newar Buddhism conforms to the patterns of social accommodation found throughout Buddhist history in India.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Due to the early debates in Buddhological circles on the attitude of the Buddha to caste, the association of Buddhist tradition with caste practice may seem irregular, but such a view is contrary to the history of the tradition. There is no inherent incompatibility between Buddhist doctrine and a caste society. Although there is debate on the hierarchy of aspirant groups, with the Buddhists arguing for the superiority of the bhiksus over the Brahmins, Buddhist traditions, especially on the popular story-telling level, clearly equate high caste rebirth with good karma. Likewise, those groups at the bottom, the chandalas are looked down upon even by Buddhist merchants in the Jataka texts (Rhys-Davids 1901: 869).

The Vajrayana tradition also upheld the hierarchical standards which separated out human beings (Stablein 1978: 532). Even in Tibet, untouchable-like groups were recognized. The social history of India has shown that once caste is the established basis of social life, kin

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### The Uray

Given the historical importance of merchants in Buddhism, we chose for study the Tuladhars, a sub-group among the high status Buddhist merchants of Kathmandu, the Uray.<sup>1</sup> Modern Uray explain their name as a derivative of upāsaka, a Sanskrit term meaning "devout layman". Buddhist identity is an important attribute of the Uray identity. The names of Uray subgroups evidence clear connections with artisans trading guilds. Most refer to craftsman occupations: Sikarmi (colloquial "Sthapit") carpenters, Kansakar ("Kasa") metal workers, Tamrakar copper workers, LoKarmi stone masons, Awa tilers, and MariKarmi confectioners.

"Tuladhar" as a subcaste name dates back to the fifteenth century rule of Jaya Sthiti Malla (Petech 1958) and is mentioned by the nineteenth century writers (Wright 1877). Literally meaning "scale holder", the use of this name may indicate an artisan subgroup that moved away from artisanship into retail merchant employment. Modern Tuladhars suggested that there were two core Tuladhar groups: families with trading ties to Tibet and the Tuladhar subgroup still known by the name "Baniya", traders in medicinal herbs.

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groups had little choice but to enter social life by joining with kin as a corporate unit. Just as Christians, Parsees, and Jews in India eventually became endogamous units defined by birth, so, too, did caste likely come to organize Buddhist devotees in Nepal. Had Buddhist devotees not conformed to proper high class social practice (especially in terms of the appropriate pollution-purity rules), they would not have been granted residence in the cities ruled by kings using Brahmanical models in arranging and governing their kingdoms.

<sup>1</sup> Tuladhars dislike the Nepali name for them, "Udas" for it may also be translated "sad.".

Socially, Uray groups constitute a marriage circle that recognizes a common level of ritual and commensual equality. There is a sense of internal stratification, however. In general, Tuladhars, Kansakars, and Tamrakars occupy the first three levels. The prestige of the Tuladhar name is shown by the growing practice of all other Uray subgroups abandoning their older designations and giving "Tuladhar" as their family name. The "older" Tuladhars judge the legitimacy of others claiming the name by membership in their oldest social institutions, for example the Samyak guthi and the Gunla Bajan. (For a description of these, see Chapter IV.)

As shown in Map I-1, there are three Tuladhar settlements in Kathmandu City and no others in the Valley: in Asan Tol, Naradevi Tol (Newari: "Neta"), and Jhwa Baha. The last is a major bahā just north of our study area. The Jhwa Baha group is clearly considered below the other two "pure Tuladhar" groups, though no one is clear on the reason for this.<sup>1</sup>

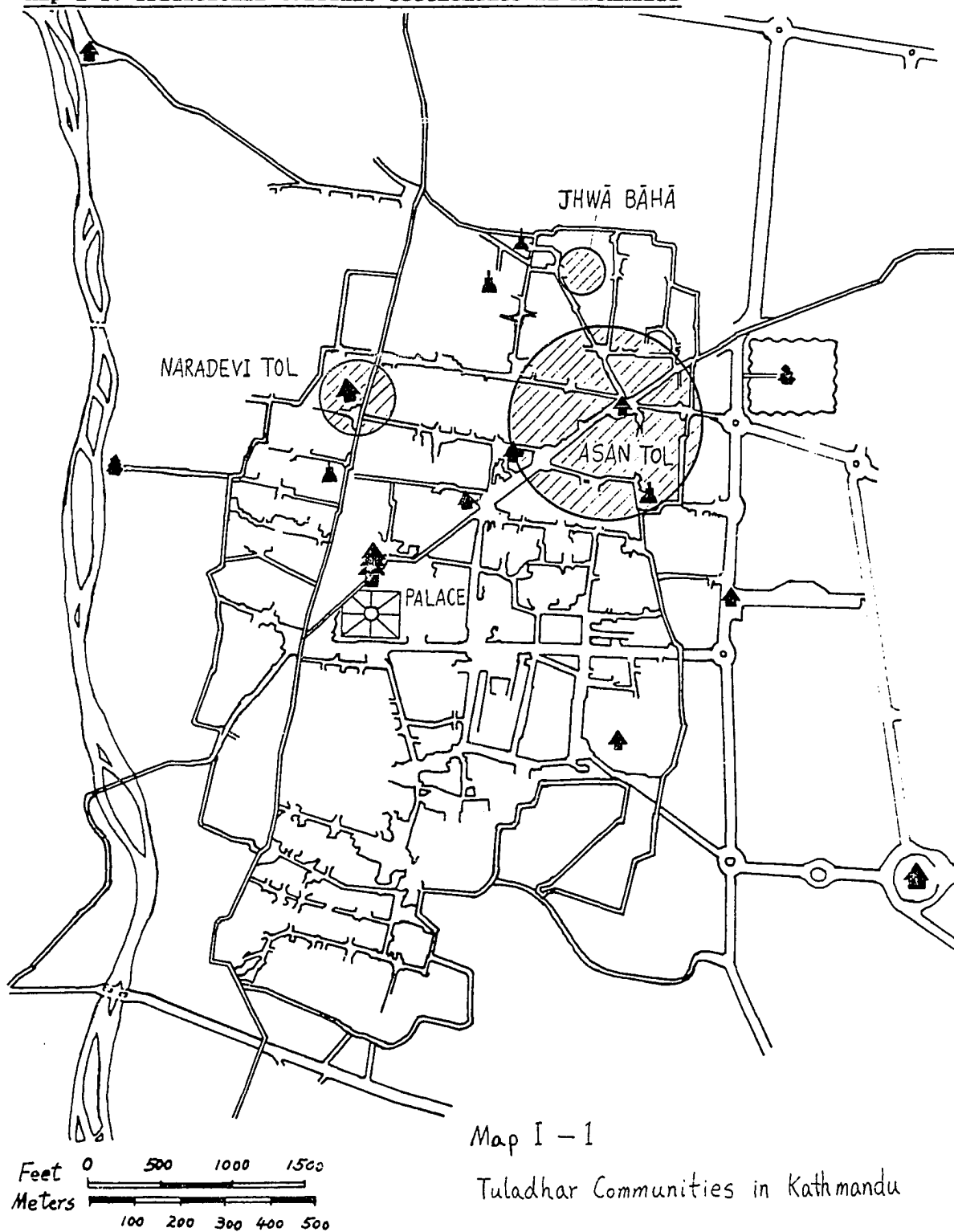
Though smaller than the Asan group and living in the northwest edge of the old city, the Neta Tuladhars claim to have a slightly higher status than the Asan group. The Neta Tuladhars are by rule an exogamous unit claiming descent from a common ancestor named Pati Sau. There is considerable rivalry between these two communities, just as there are also pervasive kin relationships between them. Indeed, marriage alliances are found between all of the Uray groups.

Among these Uray groups, this inquiry is centered on the Asan Tuladhars and their neighborhood in the northeast area of old

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<sup>1</sup>There is some indication that the founder of their lineage may have been half Tibetan.

**Map I-1: Traditional Tuladhar Settlements in Kathmandu**



Map I - 1

Tuladhar Communities in Kathmandu

Kathmandu. However, because of the exchange of women between the Uray groups, the Tuladhar subgroup defines a distinct social and cultural circle in only a limited sense and predominantly in terms of male-dominated traditions. Most precisely, then, this is a study of Uray lay Buddhist Newar culture as it is found among the Tuladhars of Asan Tol.

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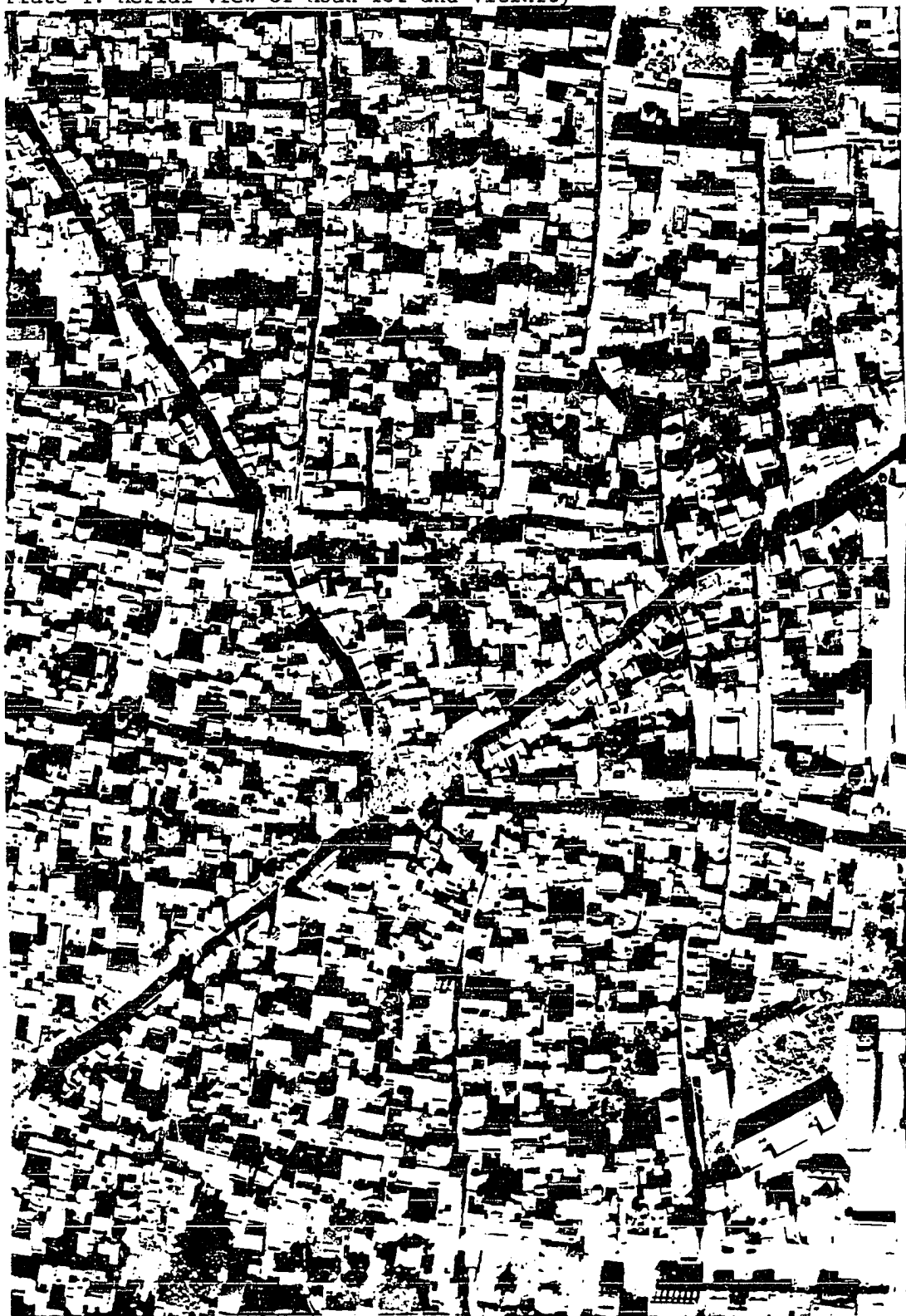
### **The Research Setting: Asan Tol and Dagu Baha**

Our task was to investigate Uray Newar Buddhist tradition from the perspective of the Tuladhars and their cultural environment in Asan Tol. We begin by presenting the religious geography of Newar Buddhist tradition centered in Asan. Likewise, we use this neighborhood as a case study in city life and one courtyard, Dagu Baha, where the investigator lived, as the prime context for observing a residential setting where Tuladhar families predominate.

When local residents refer to "Asan", they usually mean the central-most market area in northeast Kathmandu, a crossroads where six lanes meet. Lying on one of the oldest thoroughfares linking it directly with the royal palace at the center of the city, Asan Tol has been a dominant market in Kathmandu for at least five hundred years. Each lane radiating out from the crossroads has its own sub-neighborhood name so that sometimes residents along these routes affix "Asan" to the name of their locality. (For example, "Asan - Kamalachi.") For this study, we selected an area that extended roughly to these (very roughly regarded) linguistic boundaries. The only



Plate 1: Aerial View of Asan Tol and Vicinity



significant exception to this is Kel Tol, the neighborhood around Jana Baha, where we extended the study area to include the most important Buddhist temple in Kathmandu city. In Map I-2, we indicate the study area and give the major sub-neighborhoods along with other internal locality names.

Asan tol is a residential neighborhood where over 600 families live. The variation in the living circumstances of town residents is immense. Some families live right on the major bustling lanes of the city. Others live on courtyards which vary greatly in size, from the largest nani bahā (of 40 families) with acres of open space, to middle-sized courtyards (of 10 families), to the very small courtyards which are little more than small open spaces between two houses. In Asan, wealth and family size do not always correlate well with better ground-level living conditions and the overall population density is very high.<sup>1</sup>

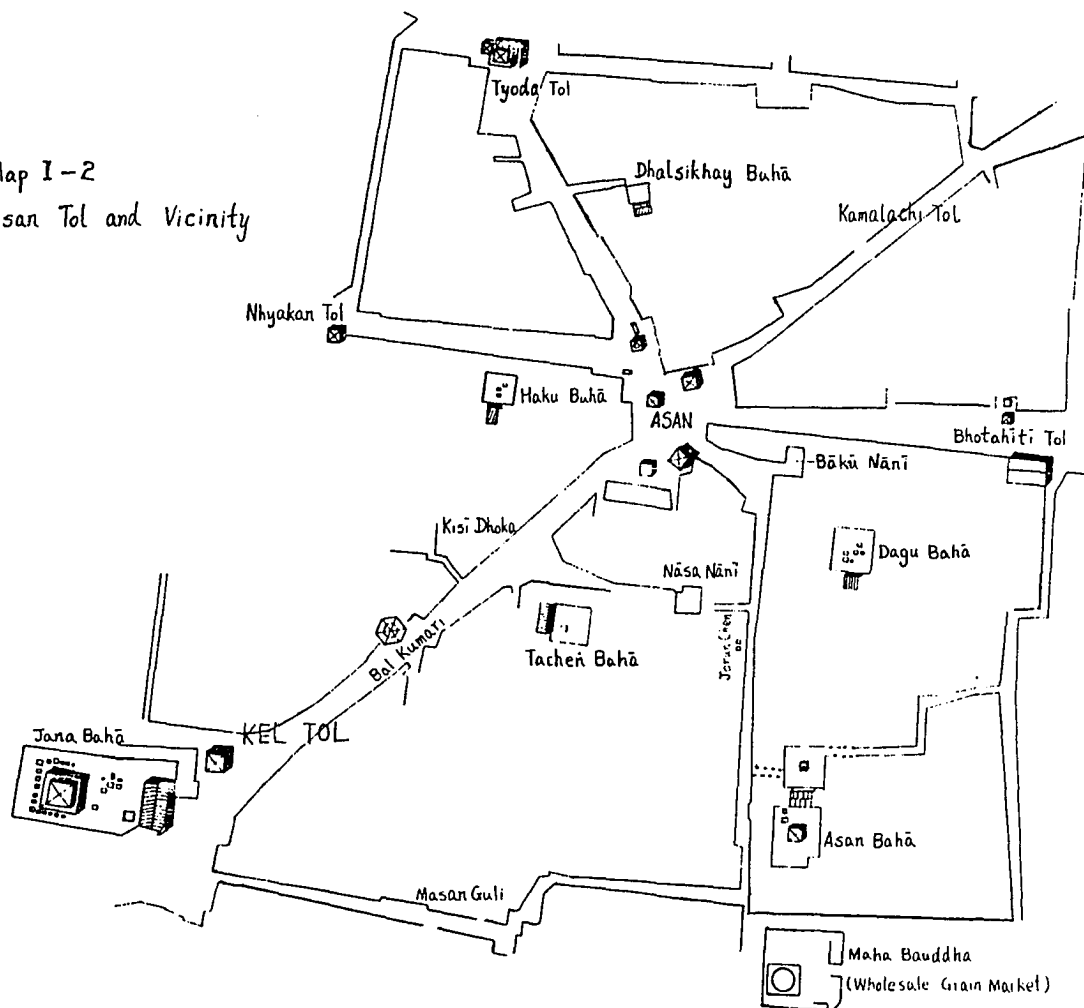
Asan is the major market in Kathmandu City, with the markets in Maru tol, Naradevi, and Indracok the only traditional centers of similar importance. Tuladhar, Shrestha, and other merchants in Asan are predominantly middleman retailers in various economic networks. They trade in rice and oils from the Valley and hills; in foodgrains and products from India (processed foods, hardware, electronics); and in goods imported from Hong Kong. Some also trade in goods produced by local artisans. A few merchants have ventured into businesses involving small scale production such as clothing, umbrellas, and eyeglasses.

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<sup>1</sup>The core of Kathmandu City has an average population density of 80 people per acre (Thapa and Tiwari 1977: 21).

**Map I-2: Asan Tol and Vicinity**

Map I-2  
Asan Tol and Vicinity



The most successful Tuladhars have extended their selling to New Road, a major street south of Asan build by Prime Minister Juddah Shamshere after the earthquake of 1934. New Road broke the traditional arrangement of Kathmandu City and opened it to modern economic exchange. Since 1951, it has become a key center of business trade, especially in modern merchandise imported from the outside world. In 1981, Tuladhars occupied 15% of the New Road area shops.

Asan tol's proximity to the wholesale grain market<sup>1</sup>, the lower overhead costs of the resident shopkeepers, and the great concentration of capital wealth available for business ventures have kept its merchants at the forefront of Kathmandu's business life.

Asan is also an important cultural center and is famous for its religious shrines. The two roof temple of Avalokitesvara in Jana Baha is visited by thousands daily. Moreover, the large free-standing temple to Annapurna is one of the most elaborately patronized in town and this goddess receives the devotions and respect of many in the passing multitude. The large stupas at Mahabauddha and Si Gha: Baha, located just outside our study area, are major Buddhist monuments in Kathmandu.

Many renowned writers, poets, and cultural activists live in Asan. Kathmandu's first printing press was located there and today there are many, including the nation's only Newari daily newspaper. In short, Asan Tol is one place in modern Nepal where there is a great

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<sup>1</sup>The wholesale grain market used to be right on the streets of Asan. Now it is in Maha Bauddha, a large courtyard space just south of Asan dominated by a large stupa.



Plate 2: Asan Tol in Early Morning



Plate 3: Asan Tol During the Dya Lwaykegu Festival

mix of peoples, ideas, and activities.

Central Asan itself is also a major ceremonial center. All important festival and political processions pass through it and it is often transformed into the primary stage for festival performances. As do most major neighborhoods in Newar settlements, Asan has its own, large, permanent stage, the dhobu.

Of all the Valley cities, Kathmandu has been the most exposed to westerners and migrants from all directions. The former walled boundaries have been lost as the in-migrant population has been accommodated in buildings erected on former paddy fields (Joshi 1974: 245). The people of Asan have been very innovative in breaking free of the classic residence patterns as residents have opened apartment spaces and small hotels in the market area. They have rented or (more rarely) sold family real estate and city land to a large number of outsiders. The buildings are an extraordinary montage of materials and styles, ranging from the indigenous design using brick facade, clay roofing tiles, and wooden trim, to the European neo-classical style of the Rana era and the modern functional forms that use cement and corrugated iron.

The urban space of Kathmandu is broken up irregularly into a maze of major market lanes, narrow passageways, and courtyards. In some places, neighbors are all relatives of the same caste; in other areas, they are all strangers, some from different ethnic groups. The courtyard can be a shared space for work, play, and cultural theatre; or else it can be a mere passageway. One's ground space environment can be relatively clean and sunny, or a dingy dank mire of disgusting



Plate 4: Asan Tol in the Late Afternoon



Plate 5: Asan Tol in the Late Evening

smells.<sup>1</sup> Buildings in Asan rise to five and six stories for many reasons.

Dagu Baha is the prime point of view for our case studies of Newar traditions. This is where I lived for the last 14 months of study. We introduce Dagu Baha here and will return to it in this study when discussing different aspects of Tuladhar religious life.

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### Dagu Baha

Located in the Bhotahity section of Asan, Dagu Baha is a middle-sized courtyard dominated by a Buddhist shrine on its south facade. It is connected to the main bazaar by a fifty foot passageway that passes through two houses at ground level. Most households with entrances on the courtyard are Tuladhars, with the exception of some Shresthas and a Vajracarya family that lives above the bahā shrine. The existence of Dagu bahā can be dated back to at least the seventeenth century, according to the bahā's records. It is a branch bahā (sakha bahā) of Ta Che Baha, also located in Asan, one of the principle 18 bahās of Kathmandu City.

On the bahā courtyard there are both very wealthy and poor Tuladhar families. The Vajracarya family living there, the men of

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<sup>1</sup>This is a quality of Newar settlement noted by almost every commentator from Father Guiseppe (1799) onward. The modern Newars say that the town used to be much cleaner. The old sweeper system that relied on untouchable labor insured that the city streets were swept twice a day; now under city government control, only the main streets are swept once daily. The older practice of defecating in nearby rice paddy fields has also ended as new buildings now occupy these locations. Thus, outsiders now foul the back lanes more. Finally, residents added that they, too, cannot shake the personal hygienic habits that assumed sweepers services.





Plate 6: Dagu Bahā: Chaityas and Kwapa Dya Shrine Facade



Plate 7: Dagu Bahā: Courtyard Gathering

and especially Nati Vajracarya, figure prominently in this study.

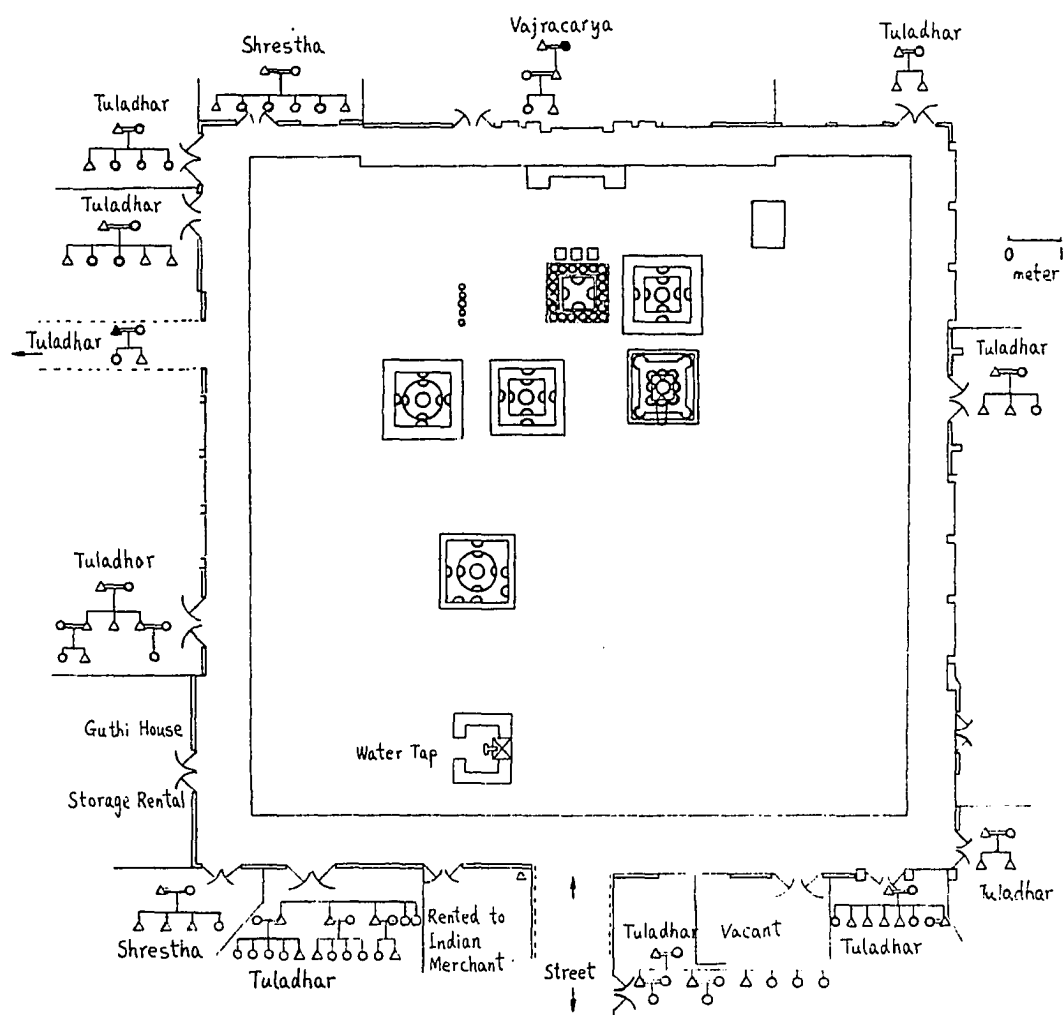
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#### Asan Tol as an Urban Environment

All cultural phenomena require material patronage for their creation, maintenance, and transmission. For this reason, it is not surprising that as a major market and home of rich merchants, Asan has supported strong cultural expressions and achieved ceremonial importance. There is a unique level of activity, organization, and accomplishment in and around the market center. Many of the older aspects of Newar city life have remained and the older layout of the streets has not been greatly altered. But because of its wealth and outside contact, Asan has also been most dramatically affected by modernization. As a result of these dual phenomena, Asan is a center where leaders of the traditional culture are found responding to changes operating in their society. In summary, then, our study area is a key center for Newar culture-- as a deposit of the ancient past and a creative nexus where the dialectics of tradition and change are intensely at work.

Thus, Asan tol is a case study in urban culture, a characteristic that makes life there very different in many ways from life in a Newar farming village. With the added contrasts introduced by differential levels of literacy, wealth, and westerization among the Asan residents, it is easy to see why the lifestyles found there span a vast spectrum of possibilities. Urban life here thus entertains a wide mix of peoples, ideas, and innovation while it simultaneously frees individuals to withdraw in an unprecedented way from undesired social

Map I-3: Residents of Dagu Bahā



intercourse. Cultural institutions discourage such withdrawal in Asan, but they have not always effectively withstood the impact of recent changes. Both characteristics of urban life in Asan are important factors affecting ongoing cultural traditions and in mediating the impact of modern changes.

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### Organization of the Study

In summary then, this study of the Tuladhars in Asan Tol maps out the central characteristics of Newar Buddhist tradition. After a short historical overview in Chapter II, we proceed by documenting the chief constituents of Newar lay Buddhist life, describing the tradition as a configuration of cultural and social systems, and finally exploring the modern situation from the perspective of the contemporary individuals living in this urban cultural environment.

In Part I, we begin by outlining the geographical setting as a religious environment (Chapter III) for the Tuladhars. This presentation moves from the extra-Valley pilgrimage sites down to the layout of the Newar house. The demographic character of Asan Tol and the nature of social relations within the Tuladhar caste and with other groups is the subject of Chapter IV. In this domain, we are especially concerned first with describing the social context of Newar lay Buddhism and then the institutions that organize Tuladhar religious activities. The next two chapters describe the ritual life for the Newar lay Buddhists: Chapter V presents the family cults, the daily ritual cycle, the nature of the Vajracarya priests' ritual service, meditative traditions, and ritual retreats called bratas;

Chapter VI considers the lay Buddhist life and the life-cycle rites that mark times of existential passage. The ethnographic treatment of the yearly round of Buddhist festival observance in Chapter VII completes the ethnographic documentation of Part I.

In Part II, Chapter VIII, we describe the distinctive characteristics of what I call "Baha Buddhism", the organization of Newar Buddhism that flourished in later Malla times. Baha Buddhism survives to the present day in fractured form and its traditions constitute the most ancient cultural structure for the Tulakhar practice of Buddhism. In reconstructing this ancient order we pay close attention to the dynamic patterns of exchange between Buddhist specialists (Vajrācāryas) and laymen and the patterns of cultural transmission within the wider Newar community. Following Singer (1972: 76ff) we are especially attentive to the content and use of cultural media in this process.<sup>1</sup>

Part III is our treatment of changes in the modern period. To characterize the complete religious context of the Asan Tulakhar, we examine the impact of Tibetan and Theravada presence on the Tulakhar community in Chapter IX. With the full religious field of Buddhism in

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<sup>1</sup>Milton Singer has done the most to develop the concept of cultural media-- "those forms with which cultures paint the landscape"-- as an analytical concept. As he defines it, "Speech is the pre-eminent cultural medium; it is a constituent of culture, symbolizes elements of belief and practice, and as activity articulates with other aspects of socio-cultural organization. Non-linguistic media also played an important role....

"Song, dance, acting out, graphic and plastic art combine in many ways to express and communicate the content of Indian culture. A study of different cultural media in their social and cultural contexts would... reveal them to be important links in that cultural continuum which includes village and town, Brahmin and non-Brahmin, north and south, the modern mass media culture and the traditional folk and classic cultures...(Singer 1972: 76-77) ."

the Kathmandu Valley now in place, we examine how the Tuladhar community has assimilated these into a single field in terms of their own patterns of practice and belief, the subject of Chapter X. Finally, in Chapter XI we summarize the findings of this study with reference to the impact that modern changes in economics, cultural media, and competing ideologies have made on the Baha Buddhist tradition and how these are changing the older socio-cultural patterns.

## CHAPTER II

### Historical Background and Social History

The history of Newar civilization is the outcome of local cultures in the Kathmandu Valley assimilating innovations from outside cultural areas, primarily from the south.<sup>1</sup> Until modern times, "Nepal" referred to the Kathmandu Valley only and its true history begins with inscriptional evidence in 464 CE of the Licchavi dynasty (Riccardi 1979). This dynasty claimed its ancestral origins from the south, from a small republic known from Shakyamuni Buddha's era (500 BCE).

The inscriptional evidence suggests that Newar settlements in the Valley go back at least several centuries earlier. It does not support later textual traditions that mention the visit of Shakyamuni Buddha (Mitra 1882; Hasrat 1970) or the patronage by Asoka Maurya's daughter Carumati (Slusser 1982). It is likely that early bhiksus followed the Buddha's injunction to spread the Dharma and came to Nepal, though no documentary evidence clearly shows this fact (Riccardi 1979: 265).

The question of Newar origins remains complex and unsolved (Doherty 1978). Because the Newari language is Tibeto-Burman, the core culture may have its roots north and east of the Valley, an assumption also supported by the general Mongolian phenotypic appearance of the Newar people. The extent of Sanskritization in the vocabulary and the loss of archaic prefixes (Glover 1970) likely indicate a very long period of contact with the Indian south and a long separation from

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<sup>1</sup> Among the Himalayan peoples, Berreman places the Newars under the rubric of "Mid-Montane Nepalese" cultural area (Berreman 1963:296; 1960: 789). I would suggest that the large Himalayan Valley civilizations (i.e. Kashmir and Kathmandu) be considered distinct cultural areas.

northern linguistic relatives. In additional support of northern origins are the Buddhist myths of origin in "MahaCina", i.e. ancient China. Although, as Brough (1948) has suggested, these myths may derive from Khotanese sources, they would have been adopted only because they fit with earlier Newar perceptions. Until there are archeological studies in the Kathmandu Valley, however, our knowledge of early Newar history will not progress much beyond conjecture.

From the Licchavi inscriptions, we know that Nepal had received a strong infusion of Indian traditions: religious cults, Buddhist monasteries with both Hinayana and Mahayana followers, notions of Brahmanical social and administrative order, and a thoroughgoing acquaintance with Sanskrit and its literature (Riccardi 1979). By this era, Nepal had become, in part, a cultural outpost of north Indian civilization. Licchavi Nepal was also highly diverse, though the Valley is relatively small (225 square miles). Here, as in Kashmir, another notable Himalayan valley civilization, various cultural movements from India merged with indigenous traditions. In both places, traditions that died centuries earlier in the plains survived longer, shielded by the geography of the Himalayas. Unlike the case of Kashmir, Buddhist tradition survived to the present day in Nepal. Newar Buddhist traditions represent, therefore, the last surviving remnant of Indian Buddhism in the subcontinent.

Throughout the Valley's history, groups from every direction came and assimilated, adding on the influence of outside cultures and increasing local diversity. The fertility of Valley lands<sup>1</sup> (Campbell

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<sup>1</sup>The British resident Hodgson said that in his opinion the Jyāpus were the best agriculturalists in all of Asia.



1837) and wealth from trade due to its location on a principal Indo-Tibetan trade route were central factors shaping Newar history. Both of these attracted outsiders and provided the resources that fostered extensive settlement, intensive socio-cultural mixing, and underwrote elaborate cultural expressions.

After the decline of Licchavi rule (c. 800 CE), there is a curious lack of historical sources for over two hundred years. Tibetan texts speak of close relations in this era between Nepalese Buddhists and the great monasteries of northeast India--Nalanda and Vikramasila (Snellgrove 1957: 105; Malla 1981: 18ff). The evolution of Buddhism in Nepal likely mirrored the situation in India, especially in the ascendancy of popular Mahayana devotionism and in the eventual predominance of Vajrayana ritualism. Nepal was clearly a small but vigorous center of Buddhism that fostered the transmission of this tradition into Tibet. Many famous teachers, both Tibetan and Indian, came to the Kathmandu Valley in the post-Licchavi era (Snellgrove 1957: 101; Bajracarya 1980: 63). There were also Newar Buddhist masters who gained a notable following (Malla 1981: 19).

Nepal also suffered some of the Muslim invasions that destroyed the Indian vihāras, but Newar Buddhist traditions survived. This can be explained by several hypotheses: that the Valley was only plundered, not occupied and therefore local institutions and trade survived; because Newar Buddhist centers were likely strengthened by the pandits and masters who fled from the destruction of Northeast India; and because successful Newar adaptations were made.

Over time, however, the Valley lost its place as an entrepot of trans-Himalayan cultural exchange, once Northeast India ceased to be

the heartland of Buddhism. Monastic tradition did not survive in Nepal, a fact we cannot date with any certainty. One possibility is that many monasteries declined in the anarchy that spread in the wake of the fourteenth century invasions, when a series of famines, earthquakes, and local armed struggles resulted in widespread loss of life and much destruction.<sup>1</sup> In any case, there seems to have been a very gradual process of decline (Slusser 1982: 289) so that Newar celibate monasticism may have survived until the nineteenth century. Later Newars desiring admission into celibate monastic institution could likely have entered the Tibetan monasteries in their midst. The Newar masters, the Vajracaryas, came to follow Vajrayana traditions in a manner very much like the Tibetan Nyingma-pa, where practice as married householders is the norm.

Rulers using the name "Malla" began ruling the Kathmandu Valley from about 1200 CE onward until 1769. Until Jaya Sthiti took power in 1382, the Malla rulers were weak and the society was divided by internal factional struggles. From his palace in Bhaktapur, a major city in the east of the Valley, Sthiti Malla came to control the Valley's political life and protected it against further invasions. From his time onward, the Valley's cultural life prospered in many fields.

Although he certainly did not introduce caste into the Valley -- a caste-organized society existed in elaborate form from Licchavi

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<sup>1</sup>We know from the history of Kashmir (Khosla 1972) that times of political anarchy and warfare led tyrants to plunder Buddhist monasteries, melt down images, and seize their landed endowments. With its institutions tied very closely to the land, Buddhism suffers when famine and political unrest befall a region.

times onward (Riccardi 1979: 266) -- Sthiti Malla made efforts to regulate social practices in the Valley by formulating legal codes and enforcing rules of intercaste relations (Slusser 1982: 67). Being a Hindu with probable ties to the orthodox Hindu Mithila kingdom to the south, Jaya Sthiti developed a political order based upon classical Brahmanical models. This influence was exerted on many levels: Brahmins from Mithila were influential at the court and in the state cult of Siva-Pasupati (Slusser 1982: 68); kings patronized the Vaisnava and Matsyendranath cults; and Malla leaders developed a system of political patronage based upon Brahmanical ideology and the enforcement of pollution and purity norms.

Roughly one hundred years after Jaya Sthiti, his descendants divided Nepal into separate jurisdictions-- as Kathmandu, Patan, and, for a century, Banepa became states independent of Bhaktapur. Kathmandu controlled land north of the Bagmati to Navakot on the Trisuli river; Bhaktapur claimed the land east to the hills around Dolakha; and Patan had jurisdiction over lands south of the Bagmati. (Banepa was later absorbed into the Bhaktapur state after an earlier period of importance in Valley politics (Slusser 1982: 62). From the end of the fifteenth century onward, the three Valley kingdoms present a complicated triple chronology, each with its own history of internal evolution and inter-kingdom struggle.

Malla Nepal was not isolated from the outside world. Influences from Moghal India were felt in administrative policy, language, royal dress, and in the presence of Muslim traders (Slusser 1982: 68). The Mallas also had relations with the small neighboring hill states. These kingdoms, especially the Gorkha state (founded in 1559) to the

west, were often drawn into the Valley's political struggles. Many mid-hill peoples from the west also migrated into the Valley during this era. Finally, trade and cultural relations with Tibet continued. Newar merchants plied the Indo-Lhasa trade route and established permanent residences along trade routes (Aziz 1978: 16) and in key central Tibetan cities. The Tibetans heavily patronized Newar artisans, often calling them to build new monasteries and create the sacred icons (Tucci 1973: 83). The close relations with Tibet allowed Newar artistic influences to spread to Mongol and Manchu China, where lamaist Buddhism was very strong. During these centuries, Chinese influences flowed into Nepal via the same networks (Snellgrove and Richardson 1968:231).

By later Malla times the pattern of north-south cultural exchange became more bi-directional. Tibetans came to the Valley to restore decaying Newar monuments and did so in their own style. Newars also imported Tibetan-made art objects. Relations with Bhutanese lamas were especially strong (Aris (1977: 249). Likewise, Newars travelled to Tibet for study and monastic ordinations (Slusser 1982: 71).

The cultural life of later Malla Nepal reached a high standard of activity and development. Tantric traditions in cultic life, shrines, and meditation gained a wide following (Slusser (1982: 73), traits that continue to the present time. Although Malla kings in their inscriptions assumed titles proclaiming their devotion to Siva-Pasupati, they still conformed to rajadharma standards of ancient Indian kingship by supporting all deserving religious practitioners and deities, Hindu and Buddhist, in the Kingdom. Jaya Prakash Malla, for example, contributed to the restoration of Svayambhu in 1750.

The Malla era kings and nobles were active in constructing all types of buildings-- temples, vihāras ("monasteries", bahā in Newari), resthouses -- and endowing these with generous land-based incomes. The Malla kings also revived and expanded festival celebrations known from Licchavi times (Slusser 1982:74). Finally, the Mallas were active patrons of the literary arts and Newari became the predominant literary language.<sup>1</sup> Literary works, drama, and musical composition flourished. Painting, metal casting, and woodcarving were also part of this period of cultural renaissance and innovation in which the Valley enjoyed special prosperity. Rivalries between Malla rulers and the aristocracies of the three kingdoms also contributed to the large output of these artistic creations. As Slusser sums up the characteristics of this era, "The rulers seem to have divided their time in a balanced way among fighting each other, pious undertakings, and intellectual dilettantism at their courts (1982:76)."

The disintegration of a strong and unified political center, however, led to the Malla downfall. The Shah conquest of the Kathmandu Valley in 1796 played upon the political instability of the Newar kingdoms and succeeded by employing a ruthless blockade of the key trade routes and bold military strategy (Stiller 1973). The conquest was a strong blow to the Newar culture that had blossomed over the past three centuries. Prithivi Narayan Shah and his successors removed Newars from state office and financed military endeavors by confiscating the lands of religious establishments and

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<sup>1</sup> During this same period, Nepali, an Indo-European language related to Hindi, became a language of growing recognition and importance due to hill migrants from the west who were settling in the Valley (Clark 1957).

others who did not have fully documented land titles (Regmi 1968: 66-67). This policy was a key instrument in extending Shah power and presence throughout the area which became modern Nepal (English 1982). New taxes and a policy of rent payment in cash instead of kind also led to economic hardship among the Valley farmers (Regmi 1968).

Some Newar merchants, however, benefited from the restoration of trans-Himalayan trade. The Shah state also used Newar entrepreneurial skill to organize mining, minting, and state accounting. Ambitious and enterprising Newars moved outside the Valley to these areas of new production to organize them and open new avenues of trade. Their doing so helped the Shahs consolidate their rule and begin to unify the country. Perhaps because of the Kathmandu elite's pre-eminent role in cooperating with the Shah rulers, the lands around Kathmandu were less tampered with in comparison to those in Patan and Bhaktapur (Regmi 1968: 70).

In the Rana period (1846-1950), the ruling Prime Ministers retained the previously confiscated lands on the grounds of national security (Regmi 1968: 72). Though in many areas the Ranas ruled ruthlessly, they did uphold the sanctity of surviving religious endowment lands. (The organizations called "guthis" which held these lands are described in Chapter IV.) As Regmi has pointed out, this policy often led Newars to resist later attempts at land reform. While upholding guthi tenure, however, the Ranas did adopt a policy of confiscating any surplus produced on guthi lands beyond that specified in the endowment deed. The government thus took control of the Valley's surplus production--which in good years was likely 30%--and allocated it for their own patronage or philanthropic choices. This

extra revenue, used in the past to accumulate the resources needed for temple restoration and maintenance, was thereby lost to Newar culture. The practice of this system was also discriminatory as guthi lands from favored (mostly Hindu) temples were exempted from this policy.

In other areas, Rana Nepal was marked by arbitrary and often despotic rule. There was no distinction between state and family treasury and the ruling class was free to confiscate townsmen's property and even their women, a practice based on intimidation that is still recalled in Asan. The Ranas sought to isolate Nepal and control its destiny with their own interests foremost. Rana policies did preserve Nepal's autonomy against the British and sustained control of an area larger than any previously known in the Himalayas.

The tolerant Hindu-Buddhist character of the Malla period was transformed to Hindu dominance by the Ranas' favored patronage of Hindu cults, discrimination against Buddhist guthis, and coercive enforcement of social codes that required conformity to orthodox Hindu standards (Hofer 1979: 40). By making adherence to these standards a prerequisite to government service and patronage, all of the social dynamics in Newar society were directed more than ever before toward the process of Hinduization. The preference for Brahmin priests instead of the Vajracarya Buddhist priests among the Newar farmers, as mentioned by Rosser (1966: 90ff), was one consequence of this trend.

After the turn of the century, Rana policies explicitly attacked Newar culture and especially the Buddhists. The government prohibited publications in Newari (Hridaya 1971), passed laws to limit Newar cultural activities, forced submission to Brahmanical rituals, and openly suppressed Buddhist teachers in the Newar community (Rosser

1966: 105). Even the Newar traders, who prospered throughout this era in their trans-Himalayan trade, came to resent these measures bitterly. When King Tribhuvan restored Shah power in 1950, most Newars in Asan welcomed the change.

The last thirty years of Shah rule in the Valley have witnessed the emergence of Kathmandu as the capital of a modern state increasingly in touch with the outside world. Expanded communication, educational opportunities, and political modernization within Nepal have come slowly (Rose 1970: 167) as the country confronts its massive problems due to population increases, migration, and ecological degradation (Eckholm 1976: 77; Weiner 1973: 629).

Because Newars are found at every level in this society, from the most learned to the subsistence farmer, the changes among the Newar groups vary. In general, they differ according to class lines, locality, and the idiosyncratic history of each group in the recent past. Newar literati, especially in the Hindu castes, have been most successful in obtaining government positions and political power (Blaikie 1980: 95). Some Newar merchants, both Hindu and Buddhist, have prospered greatly, making the Newars, overall, the richest single ethnic group in the land (Gaige 1975: 160). Situated in the capital, Newars have been well-placed to profit from the modern trends such as tourism and early industrial development. Newar intellectuals likewise hold a prominent place in the nation's literary life. Although the Newar farmers have also been affected by some agricultural innovation (especially in chemical fertilizers), unlike the farmers in the neighboring hill regions, they are relatively prosperous due to the fertile Valley soil and the fairly regular



rains (Webster 1983: 152).

Dissatisfaction with Shah rule, however, has not ended. Conscious efforts to promote Nepali as the one official language have been bitterly resented and Newars have taken the lead in protesting this government policy. This movement started when non-Nepali radio broadcasts were ended in 1965. Newar Buddhists have been active in resisting these policies and in promoting the recognition of Newar culture as a legitimate Nepalese tradition that should have a place in modern Nepal (Gaige 1975: 125). The success of Marxist-communist leaders in Bhaktapur, Patan, and Kathmandu bears witness to Newar dissatisfaction with post-1951 state policies. Many educated and enterprising Newars desire a society where cultural pluralism is allowed and the opportunity for political-economic development fairly distributed. Newar political unity, almost unknown in the recent past, has increased as a result of these trends.

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#### The Social History of Newar Civilization

From its earliest beginnings, the Kathmandu Valley civilization was an ethnic crossroads where many different groups from every direction travelled through and settled. In the process of settling in and, over generations, assimilating their group's traditions with those of the already settled, newcomers continually added to and modified the culture in the Kathmandu Valley. It is this diverse "cumulative tradition" we designate as "Newar".

From Licchavi times onward (300-800 CE), Newar civilization was the outcome of two interacting forces: the cumulative elaboration of

early formative cultural core components such as language, religious complexes, and social institutions; and the impact of the traditions introduced by those who successfully integrated themselves in the Kathmandu Valley. This dialectic produced an energetic and vibrant core Newar culture just as it simultaneously fostered great social and cultural diversity. Both forces continue to operate today.

The Kathmandu Valley's geographical isolation prevented Nepal from being directly linked to many of the influences that transformed northern India, especially those of the last millenium. Since the Valley was not incorporated into any political union with governments to the south --Muslim or British-- its own political center was free to articulate and radiate its own autonomous cultural models.

Although speakers of Nepali were not uncommon in the Valley in late Malla times (Clark 1957: 187) , the number of these migrants began to increase rapidly after the Shah conquest of the Valley in 1769. Today about fifty per cent of the inhabitants are non-Newars (Toffin 1973: 9).

After the Shah restoration in 1950, the central government bureaucracy expanded rapidly (Rose 1970: 167). Simultaneously, transit, communication, and trade linkages, both within Nepal and with the outside world, increased. Many migrants from other districts in Nepal settled around Kathmandu City; a recent study estimated that twelve per cent of the old city's population is recent migrants (Tiwari and Thapa 1977: 22). As a result, the Kathmandu Valley has become an even more complex ethnic setting.

The emerging modern society in the Valley is even more diverse than its antecedents. Hill Tamangs living on the edge of the Valley

have greater access to labor markets in the agricultural season (Ishii 1978). Indian merchants and consumers from all economic strata come in increasing numbers to sell and buy. In addition, over 5,000 Tibetan refugees have settled in the Valley since 1959 (Dharmasala 1981). Foreigners working in international development and tourists have also become regular facts of life in Kathmandu. In the thirty-three years since it opened its doors to the outside world, Greater Kathmandu has been transformed from the ceremonial center of a small kingdom to the capital of a modern, internationally-connected nation-state.

As these changes have rolled over Nepal, the old Newar domestic settlements have not been encroached upon very much. Instead, their former farmlands around the old cities have been turned into outsiders' settlements.<sup>1</sup> This process has often, but not always, come at the expense of Newar landlords and their traditions. These changes have affected the Newars in other ways for they had to adapt to the new order of political power and patronage, new market networks, and the world outside Nepal as it has been imported by foreigners. It is into this rapidly changing society, as found among the Tuladhars of Asan Tol, that we pursued our investigation of Newar Buddhist tradition.

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<sup>1</sup>This land has been used to build hotels for a tourist industry that accommodates about 160,000 visitors yearly (Rieffel 1979), create diplomatic enclaves, and house a swelling in-migrating Nepalese middle-class (Tiwari and Thapa 1977).

Part 1:

ETHNOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION



CHAPTER III  
The Religious Geography of the Kathmandu Valley:  
The Buddhist Perspective from Asan Tol

Looking out from the Asan Tol rooftop, Tuladhars recognize a vast pantheon of deities arrayed across the Kathmandu Valley's landscape and beyond. The Buddhist layman resorts to this religious geography that in many cases dates back to the Licchavi period (Slusser 1982: 47). For pragmatic purposes and making punya ("good karma"), Newar Buddhists give pūjā ("ritual offerings") at many shrines throughout their lifetimes as it is felt that the more widely one makes puja, the greater the benefit will be. This geography that contains the Newar pantheon is reiterated in every ritual a Vajracarya priest performs for his Tuladhar patron, as he invites all principal deities of the Valley to attend.

Buddhists and Hindus in the Kathmandu Valley recognize different though partly congruent pantheons. In some cases, the same site-- temple, image, hilltop, or river confluence -- may have two different identifications.<sup>1</sup>

The religious geography of the Kathmandu Valley is also a living entity. Some shrines rise in popularity, due to miraculous events , testimonies to recent cures, or for being the residence of a holy man.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>It is also noteworthy that both the Tibetans (Snellgrove 1957: 98) and the Buddhist Tamangs (March 1982) have always thought of the Kathmandu Valley as a Buddhist country.

<sup>2</sup>In 1981, a relatively unimportant Siva temple near the Hanuman Dhoka Palace underwent such a meteoric rise when it was discovered that the linga was "sweating" profusely. It drew thousands of devotees as the word spread, as well as an immense flood of pūjā donations for the priestly attendants.

Tuladhars vary greatly as they interact with this highly elaborated pantheon surrounding them. As there is no single notion for organization, many factors condition their involvement: family tradition, programs led by Vajracaryas, recommendations by astrologers and friends, and the idiosyncracies of biography. Our presentation of this pantheon is based upon the contemporary Tuladhar involvement and awareness.<sup>1</sup> Because the Tuladhars as an elite group have had the resources to visit distant shrines, their sense of religious geography reaches to quite distant places and also to many locations in the Valley. In the first part of this chapter, we map these from the periphery down to the city boundaries.

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#### SHRINES OUTSIDE OF THE KATHMANDU VALLEY

The Banepa valley to the east was from Malla times involved with the political fortunes and the royal lineage of Bhaktapur (Slusser 1982: 44). The villages around Banepa and around Panauti to the south have ancient ties to Kathmandu as well.<sup>2</sup> The most important shrine there for Newar Buddhists is the Avalokitesvara of Nala village, located several kilometers northwest of Banepa town. Banepa, Nala, and Panauti also have major temples to manifestations of the goddess Durga so that Kathmandu Newars occasionally make short one-day pilgrimages trips to them, adding a picnic to the day's outing.

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<sup>1</sup>There is clear evidence that the Sanskrit pandits of the Malla court recognized many distant shrines in the Himalayas and in India as pilgrimage sites (Clark 1957:173).

<sup>2</sup>Bahās from Panauti and nearby villages send images to the twelve year Samyak festival in Kathmandu.

The most important Buddhist pilgrimage site to the east is the hilltop shrine called " Namera" (or more formally, "Namo Buddha"). Newar Buddhist tradition recognizes this place as the locus classicus of the Mahasattva Raj Kumar Jataka, one of the most often told stories and a frequent subject of Newar art.<sup>1</sup>

To the north, on one of the trade routes to Tibet is Manichuda, a place also associated with a Jataka figure, Manichuda.<sup>2</sup> Before motor transportation, a trip there entailed a four-day outing; now it can be done in a day. Further north and closer to the Himalayan range proper is Gosainkunda (New: Sanlu), a lake sacred to Siva. It was a pilgrimage destination especially sacred to Newar kings and is still visited by Newar laymen.

Tibet was not regarded as a place of Newar pilgrimage.

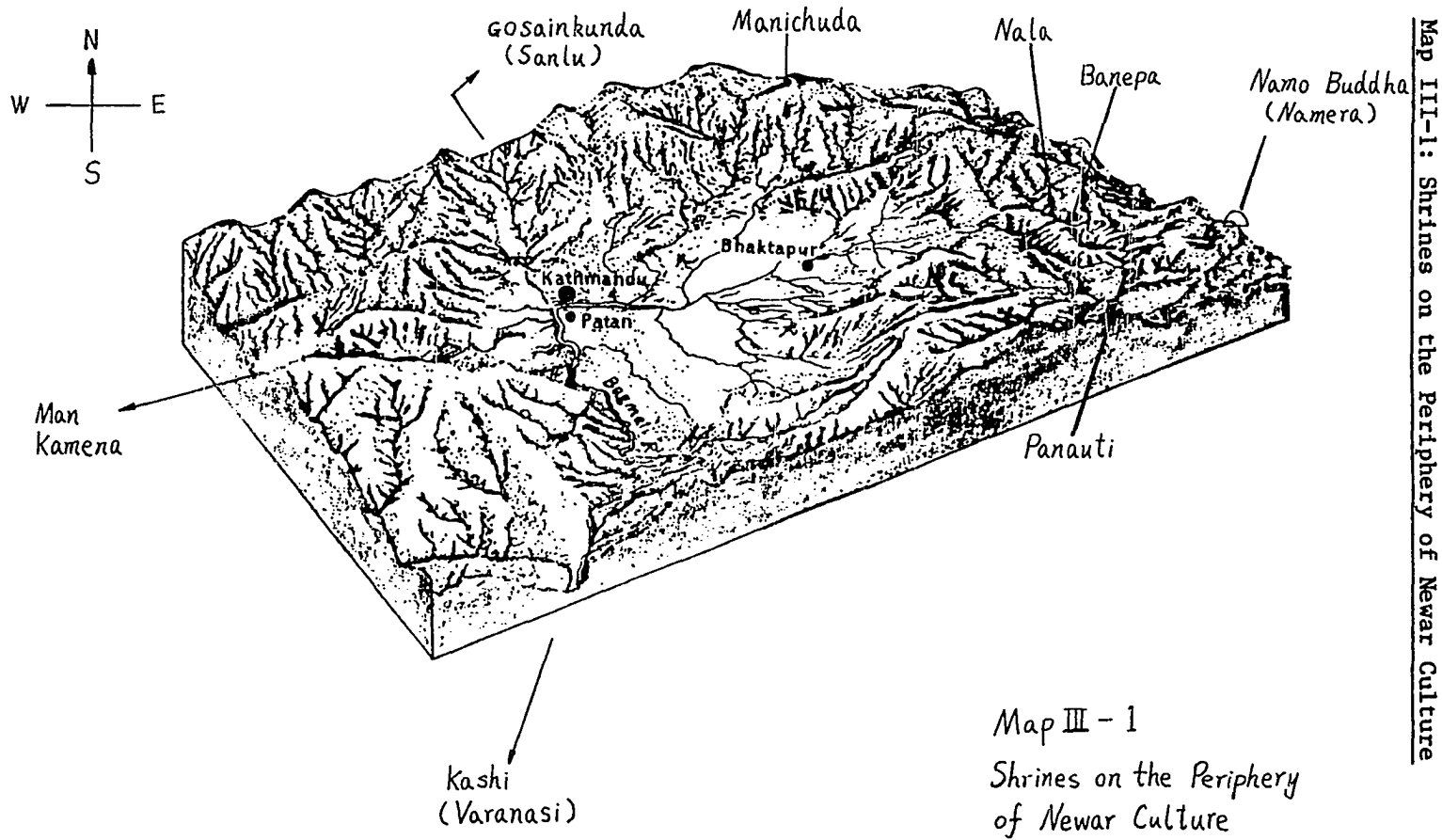
Two days walk to the west of the Valley is the temple of Man Kamena, a well known female deity who grants the wish of true devotees. Access by motorable road makes this shrine a most popular pilgrimage spot today for Hindus and Buddhists Newars alike.

Consistent with the history of Newar culture, ties to the south are the most frequently recognized. The importance of Kashi (Varanasi) is indicated by the many idiomatic expressions in Newari that invoke it. For Hindu and Buddhist Newars alike, Kashi is seen as a desirable place to deposit cremation ashes, perform shrāddha pūjās to departed ancestors, and for pilgrimage in general. The sacred

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter VIII for a summary of this popular story.

<sup>2</sup>Manicuda was the name of Shakyamuni Buddha in an earlier lifetime who gave up his life to save another country from an epidemic (Lienhart 1963).





histories of many Kathmandu divinities, Hindu and Buddhist, are still traced to Kashi.<sup>1</sup> Bus pilgrimages to the great Buddhist holy places in India are now common and about twenty percent of the Tuladhars have taken such trips.

Shrines outside the Kathmandu Valley fall beyond the circle of regular ritual and devotional attention. They should be seen as discrete sacred centers linked to the Kathmandu Valley as satellites connected to Asan by pilgrim pathways.

These shrines outside of the Kathmandu Valley are important to Newar Buddhist culture for many reasons. It is widely held that in a lifetime one should visit as many holy sites as possible. Thus they constitute an ideal program that focuses devotional activities on pilgrimage.<sup>2</sup>

Distinctly Buddhist centers such as Manichuda and Namera also provide a strong basis for Newar Buddhists identifying their own history with the history of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, famous gods, and teachers. This characteristic role of important religious sites also applies to many shrines in the Kathmandu Valley.

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<sup>1</sup> Annapurna, Bhadra Kali, Kathi Simbhu, for example.

<sup>2</sup> As Bharati points out, pilgrimage and circumambulation have an important role in the tantric tradition (1964: 85).



Plate 8: Svayambhū Hill as Seen from as Asan Rooftop



Plate 9: Painting Depicting Manjusri's Creation of the Kathmandu Valley

### KATHMANDU VALLEY AS SACRED REALM

The creation of the Kathmandu Valley is described in the Svayambhū Purāṇa, a text dating back to at least the fourteenth century (Mitra 1882-1971 ed.: 245). This Buddhist account establishes the sacredness of the Valley which is now delimited and encircled by mountain ridges and peaks. This story of the Valley's history, said to be that given by Shakyamuni Buddha at the time of a visit to Svayambhu, the chief Buddhist shrine in Nepal<sup>1</sup>, explains the origins of this site and the subsequent settlement of the Kathmandu Valley.<sup>2</sup> As discussed in Chapter VIII, this account is the product of a later doctrinal system centered on the Adi Buddha, the primordial Buddha, the reality from which the phenomenal world evolved. The principle four peaks around the Valley were centers for the different Buddhist figures who shaped this hierophony. Manjuśri, an important celestial Bodhisattva, emptied the former lake, created the Valley, insured the preservation of Svayambhu and began establishing shrines across the Valley, making it suitable for human settlement. Thus, Newar culture and its physical environment, says the Purana, has its roots in a unique hierophony of the Buddhist cosmos.

Every geographical location of note--hillock, pond, tree, or

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<sup>1</sup>See the discussion of Svayambhū later in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup>Because this text supplies so much in the way of background information on the sacred geography of Newar Buddhism, I will present an extended summary of the important sections to supplement the discussion here and elsewhere in this chapter. The relevant text for this section on the Valley's religious foundations is located in Appendix A. A full translation of the Svayambhū Purāṇa is the next desideratum in the field of Newar Buddhist studies.

rock-- has a religious shrine and history.<sup>1</sup> Nearly every watercourse in the Valley is a naga domicile. Thus, contemporary Newar Buddhists see their physical environment through an array of religious identities and histories.

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#### VALLEY PEAKS

The four peaks mentioned in the Svayambhū Purāna, Jama Cho, Sipu Cho, Pu Cho, and Dilla Cho, are regarded as pilgrimage sites that a Newar Buddhist should visit at least once in a lifetime. All have Buddhist shrines at or near their peaks. All require one full day's outing, although two are reachable by jeep. Jama Cho has a large stupa on its peak; each year on the full moon of the month of Magh, a festival is held there which is celebrated by Tibetans, Tamangs, and Newar Buddhists. Tuladhar guthis from Kathmandu assist pilgrims and perform pūjās for it.

Looking out from an Asan rooftop, it is possible to see all four of these peaks. Knowledgable laymen do so and recall, as was done for me, the mythological account in the Svayambhū Purāna .

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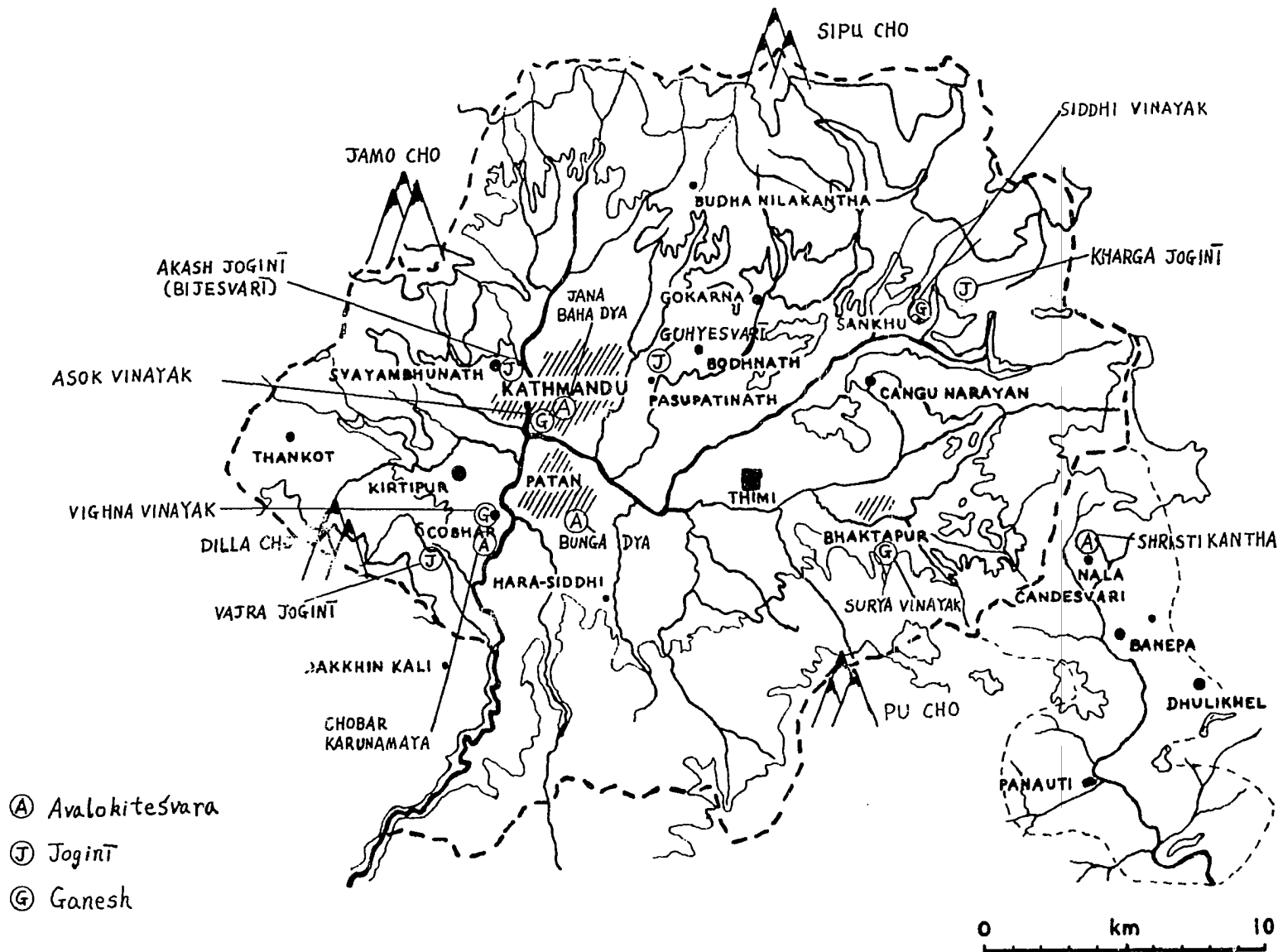
#### GROUPS OF FOUR: MAJOR GODS AND GODDESSES

The most prominent organizing principle found in the religious field of the Kathmandu Newars is in the groups of four gods and goddesses. This formula for imposing order on the Valley geography

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<sup>1</sup>For the scholar intent on recording these places, this is unfortunately not an exaggeration.

Map III-2: Groups of Four Deities in the Kathmandu Valley



dates back to Licchavi times (Allen 1975: 2). These groupings link together major shrines of the most important divinities conceptually into circles of devotional involvement.<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that Asan Tol falls inside all of these directional groupings.

### The Four Ganeshes

Asan Tuladhars often visit the Kathmandu Ganesh, called locally Maru gana dya. The others-- at Chobar, Sankhu, and south of Bhaktapur are popular outings for pūjā and picnics.

As mentioned below, every sub-neighborhood has its own Ganesh shrine and Tuladhar families have traditional ties to one such temple. For both Hindu and Buddhist Newars, Ganesh is a very popular god and worshipped at the start of every ritual.

### The Four Avalokitesvara-Karuṇāmayas

As has been the case with Buddhist laymen everywhere across Asia, the divinity Avalokitesvara is by far the most popular focus of lay Buddhist devotion for the Tuladhars. Newars recognize 108 different forms of this deity, as they are pictured around the first floor lintel of the Jana Baha temple in Asan (A. Vajracarya 1979). There is even a tradition that specifies an Avalokitesvara who presides over each month.

Avalokitesvara answers devotees prayers, makes the rains fall, and is regarded as a compassionate refuge for every sort of distress. This divinity is also a special protector of travelers and of

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<sup>1</sup>This classification formula is shared by all Newars in the Kathmandu Valley, but there is regional variation, especially for the lesser deities, in specifying the deities.

traders.<sup>1</sup>

The Kathmandu Karuṇāmaya in Jana Baha is the center of Newar Buddhist devotionism in the city of Kathmandu and the focus of frequent Asan Tuladhar attention. It is discussed later in this chapter.

Bunga dya (of Bungamati and Patan) is clearly the most popular deity in the Kathmandu Valley. The Asan Tuladhars make a special point of going to Patan at least once during the yearly festival<sup>2</sup> and most go on an intermittent basis throughout the year. On every day of the ratha jātrā, the huge chariot procession, modern entrepreneurs run minibuses from the central Asan market twice each morning.

Chobar Karuṇāmaya is located in the center of this hilltop Newar settlement south of Kathmandu town.<sup>3</sup> Several Asan Tuladhar groups make regular excursions to Chobar, a guthi-sponsored activity. Inscriptions at the temple reveal a long history of patronage by Asan Tuladhars.

The Shristikantha Karuṇāmaya is located in Nala, a village just east of the Kathmandu Valley, as we mentioned above.<sup>4</sup> In Nala there

<sup>1</sup>One of the most popular Buddhist festivals in Asan Tol is the Cakan Dya Jatra. It celebrates the mythic hero of local origin named Singhsatabahu who is rescued by Avalokitesvara in the form of a horse (Lewis and Tuladhar (In preparation)).

<sup>2</sup>At the time of this festival in Patan, the king of Nepal along with thousands of others from every level of society come to make offerings and show their devotion.

<sup>3</sup>For the Buddhists in Patan, this shrine is visited on a daily basis during the special Buddhist month called Gunla. (See Chapter VII.)

<sup>4</sup>As discussed in Chapter VIII, this form of Avalokitesvara presents the classic later Buddhist understanding of deitiēs according to the Adi Buddha theory (Wayman 1973: 53).



Plate 10:  
Padmapani  
Avalokitesvara



Plate 11: Indrayani Pitha



is also a history of Asan Tuladhar patronage.

As part of an old and now rarely observed tradition of Karunamaya worship, laymen can make a circumambulation of all four shrines in a single day of walking. Most Tuladhars had visited the distant shrines at least once in their lives.

### The Four Joginis

A Jogini is a female consort of many male Vajrayana Buddhist divinities. Even though their origins derive from the esoteric level of Buddhist tradition, these shrines are the object of widespread popular worship and patronage.<sup>1</sup>

Closest to downtown Kathmandu and lying on the road to Svayambhu, Bijesvari (or Akasha Jogini) is the most important Jogini for the Tuladhars. The temple is enclosed by a courtyard full of chaityas and bears evidence to many years of Tuladhar patronage. Bijesvari is the center where Tuladhars who have received an esoteric Vajrayana initiation may take further teachings from Vajracarya masters and view special Vajrayana dance performances. (We discuss this further in Chapter V.)

The other three major Jogini shrines at Pharping (Vajra Jogini), Sankhu (Kharga Jogini), and Guhyesvari (Nil Tara Jogini) are often the focus of devotional outings. Most Tuladhar adults had visited all of the Joginis at least once. Several other Jogini temples are located in more secluded locations and are the subject of tales about tantric

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<sup>1</sup>These Jogini temples are well known in the Tibetan tradition (Dowman 1982). The Vajra Jogini temple has a cave shrine to Padma Sambhava and a monastery nearby.



Plate 12: Newar Woodblock Print of a Jogini

masters of past eras. Jwala Mai, a goddess with a hilltop tantric complex north of town and Vajravarahi to the southeast were also utilized by the Tuladhars from time to time.<sup>1</sup>

### Other Groups of Four

Other divinities having four-fold groupings -- Kali, Vishnu-Narayan, Siva-Mahadeva -- are not utilized by the Tuladhars, though most know of their existence.

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### TĪRTHAS

A tīrtha is a special watercourse site, often a confluence, that has been sanctified by a mythological account. Both Hindus and Buddhists in the Kathmandu Valley recognize many such locations which may be grouped together conceptually for some festival or ritual event. Although the lists of tīrthas overlap, the Buddhist and Hindu Newars have their own accounts that explain the origins of each site from their own sacred histories.

One very important grouping is found in the Svayambhū Purāna<sup>2</sup>

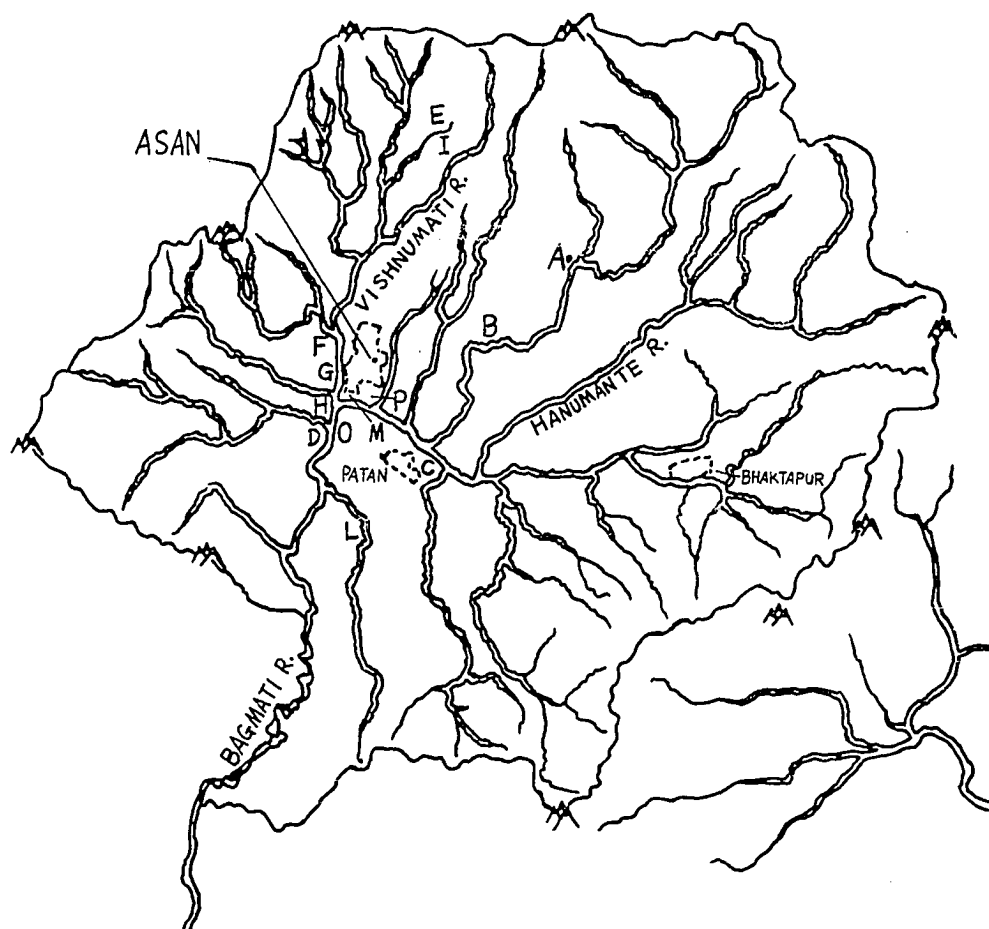
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<sup>1</sup>Ceremonial connections between Asan and these deities were once stronger. For example, the Vajra Jogini pallanquin festival once came all the way to downtown Kathmandu from Pharping, a considerable distance, but now no longer does so.

<sup>2</sup>The text makes the clear statement that the nagas of the Kathmandu Valley are alligned in a cosmos created and ruled by Buddhist divinities:

After Krakacchanda Buddha created the Bagmati and Vishnumati rivers...] the nagas, led by Kalika Nagaraja, tried to fill up the Valley again with a torent of rains. Avalokitesvara, assisted by Samantabhadra, took compassion on the populace and subdued the nagas. In return for compliance, each of the ten major nagas were given a tīrtha. (Adapted from Wright 1958:50)

Map III-3: Major Tīrthas in the Kathmandu Valley



(See Figures III - 1 and III - 2  
for Identifications)

where the origin of the 10 Naga tīrthas is described. The following list of the 12 Naga tīrthas is also specified in this account:

Figure III-1: Naga Tīrthas from the Svayambhū Purāna:

Map Reference	Tīrtha	Location	Naga
A	Sodhana	Gokarna	Taksaka
B	Santa	Guhyeśvari	Somasikhi
C	Sankha	Sankhamol, Patan	Sankhapala
D	Raja	South of Kathmandu	Surupa
E	Manorath	Tokha	Kulika
F	Nirmala	NW of Kathmandu	Parala
G	Nidhana	Kanga	Nandopananda
H	Jnana	Kalimati	Vasuki
I	Chintamani	Tokha Dobhan	Varuna
J	Promoda	Danaga	Padma
K	Sulaksana	Bhajangal	Maha Padma
L	Jaya Tīrtha	Nekhu	Karkota

Each of these sites also has other sacred histories which are known in the Buddhist community.<sup>1</sup> In the sequence of shrāddha pūjās done following the death of a family member, Tuldhars visit one site each month in this order.

A second series of tīrthas is specified for the ten sacred bathing places during every night of the Mohini (Nepali: "Dasain") festival. This grouping is used principally by Newars in and around Kathmandu and Patan:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The source for these is oral avadana recitations in my possession.

<sup>2</sup>Bhaktapur has its own set of tīrthas that has been merged with the aṣṭamātrikā shrines just outside the town borders (Gutschow 1975: 21).

Figure III-2: Tīrthas Visited During the Nava Ratri Observance  
During the Mohini Festival

<u>Map</u>	<u>Deity of Tīrtha</u>	<u>Location</u>
C	Chamunda	Sankamol, Patan
F	Lhuti Devi/Indrayani	NW of Kathmandu
A	Mahadevi	Gokarna
P	Jamalesvar	Kalmochan
M	Bhairav	Pacali Bhairav
E	Manmai ju Devi	Tokha
N	Vatsala	Nhau Ghat
O	Nai Ajima	Teku
G	Kangesvari	W Kathmandu
B	Guhyesvari	Guhyesvari

This same pattern of recognizing watercourses as sacred is replicated on down to the most local level. Wherever there is a stream or river confluence in the Valley, there will likely be some religious shrine there. As cremations are the chosen form of disposing of the dead and since these are ideally done by a riverside, tīrthas are also frequently used for this purpose. Other cults also have been developed at the tīrtha sites.

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#### AṢṬAMĀTRKĀS

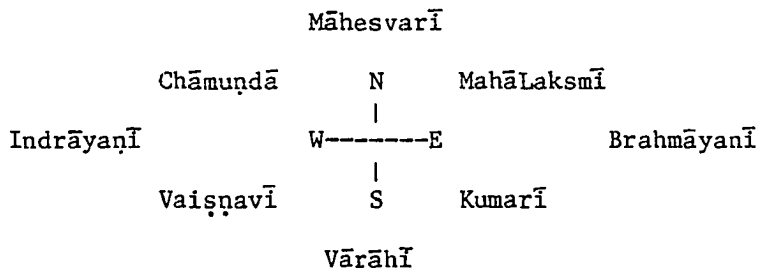
The Aṣṭamātrkās, or the "eight mother goddesses", occupy the role of protectors outside of Newar towns and around other sacred centers. Though clearly derived from the great Hindu gods<sup>1</sup>, these fierce female deities have been accepted by both Hindus and Buddhist Newars as guardians and as symbols of spiritual delusion (Pott 1948: 84).

<sup>1</sup>The origin of the free-standing aṣṭamātrkā sites is associated with pīṭhas, specially recognized rocks that mark the sites where, according to the Śiva-Sati myth, pieces of Devi fell to the earth after she fasted unto death and Siva danced madly holding onto her body (Bharati 1965: 87; Macdonald and Stahl 1979: 48).

Buddhist texts and paintings identify these figures with the nine planets (Van Kooji 1977: 61; Malleman 1975: 276) and as servants of the Directional Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (Pal and Bhattacharya (1969: 39-43). (See the discussion of the latter below.) The aṣṭamātrkāś are commonly encountered on the roof struts of Buddhist temples and bahās.

Most aṣṭamātrikā sites follow a regular correlation of cardinal directions with the eight goddesses. This pattern is shown in the following figure:

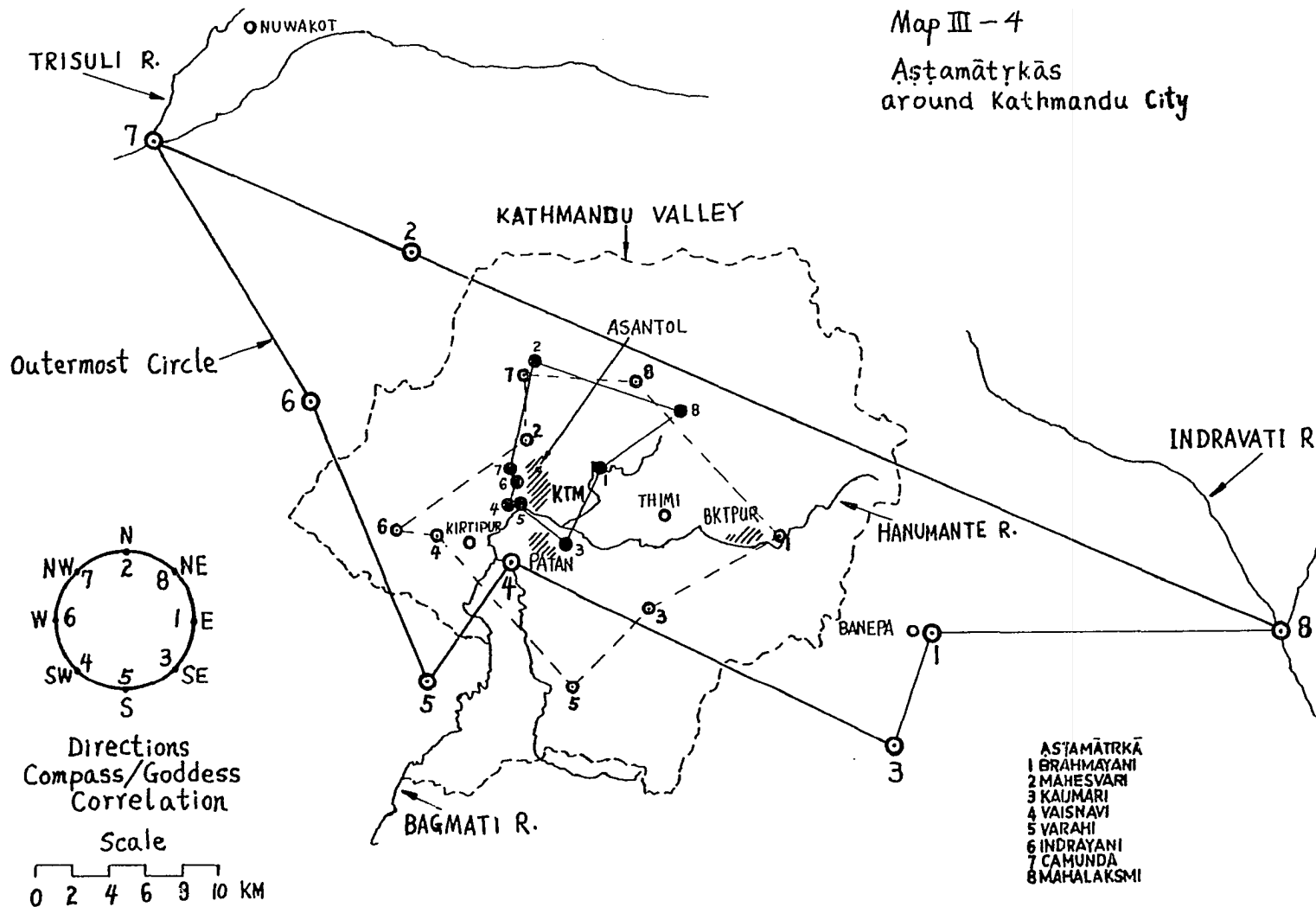
Figure III-3: Directional Pattern in AṣṭaMatrkā  
Temples Outside of Kathmandu Town



Shrines at any given site range in the extent of physical elaboration. Some are only marked by a series of stones, others may be surmounted by a three roof temple, depending on the history of patronage.

Gutschow and Bajracarya (1977) have identified three concentric rings of aṣṭamātrkāś which have been articulated around Kathmandu City. Each of these rings conforms to the pattern given above and shown in Map III-4.

Most of these 24 shrines would not be known by Buddhist laymen unless they participated in a special Vajrācārya-led series of





pilgrimage outings called pītha pūjā (Gutschow and Vajracarya 1977: 2; Stoddard (1979: 112). The Tuladhars have regular contact with some of these goddesses more directly during the Panchare festival when their pallanquins are brought into Asan and household representatives worship them.

Since most of the well-patronized aṣṭamātrkā pīthas also have shrines to the other seven mātrkāś, it is possible to worship all by going to only one. For the Tuladhars of Asan Tol, the Indrayani pītha, which they refer to simply as "pītha", is the place for most aṣṭamātrkā offerings. Very often, Vajrayana rituals call for offerings there to the mātrkāś (Vajracarya 1980) so that the Tuladhars know the location well. Tuladhars regard The pītha as a frightening place, especially at night, and associate it with malevolent spirits and human beings. Across the river from "their" pītha is Karan Dipa, the ghat where all Tuladhars are cremated.

#### DIGU DYA SHRINES

The shrines to the lineage gods, Digu Dya, are located outside the old town boundaries.<sup>1</sup> The shrines themselves are always groups of stones, usually in groups of 5 or 7, arranged in a line. No Tuladhar informant could give a Sanskritic name for his Digu Dya and people use this term only in referring to this god.

The older pattern of lineages having their own discrete shrines has given way in recent times to groups of Digu Dyas being moved to one spot. Over 85% of the Asan Tuladhars now have their Digu Dyas in

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<sup>1</sup>The cult of the Digu Dya is also observed by the Parbatiya peoples as the kul devatā (Bista 1972).

Pakanajol, an neighborhood north of town. (See Map III-5.) Two other small subgroups have their shrines to the west and east of town.

As family protectors, the Digu Dyas are worshipped twice during the year, when families go to the shrine for pūjā and a small feast.

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### SVAYAMBHŪ

The religious complex at Svayambhū is the most important Buddhist center in the Kathmandu Valley and likely one of the oldest stupas in Asia.<sup>1</sup> Situated on a dual-peaked hillock 3 km west of Asan, Svayambhū is the dominant focus of Newar Buddhist devotionism. Although the Kathmandu Newars visit this shrine with the greatest frequency, Buddhists from all over the Valley come for pradakṣiṇā and other forms of worship.

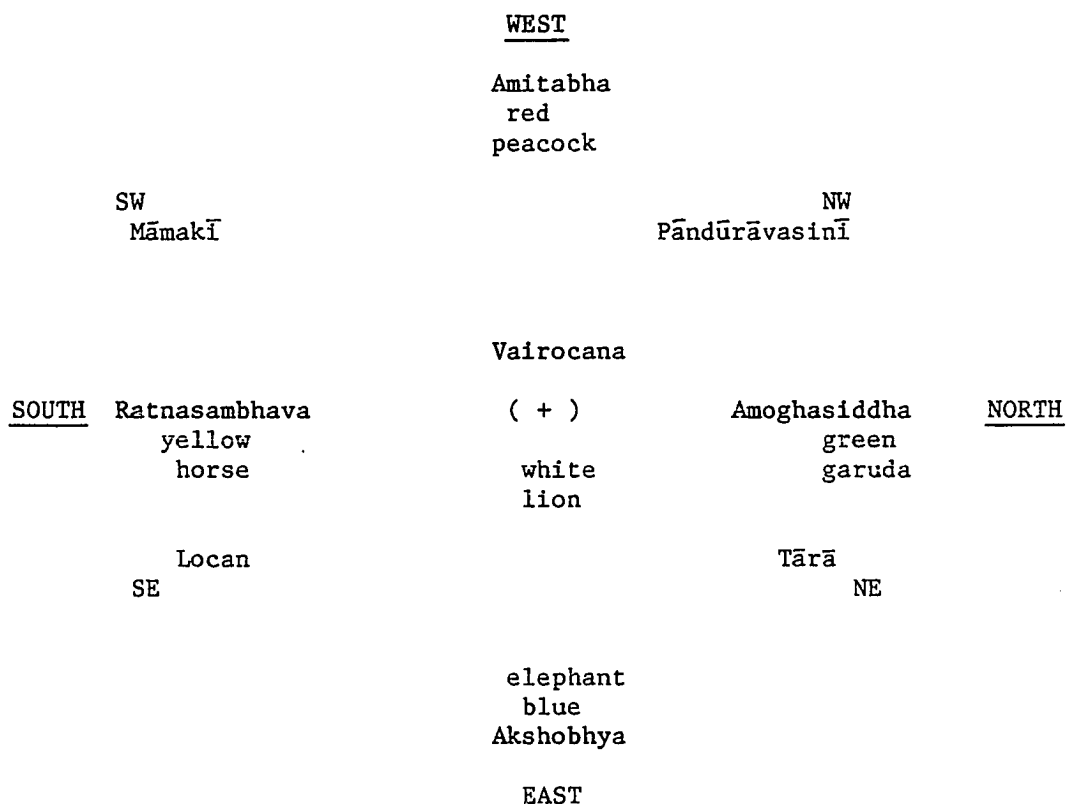
From Licchavi times, Svayambhū has also been a chief point of pilgrimage in the Valley for Tibetan peoples. From at least late Malla times onward, Svayambhū was controlled by Bhutanese lamas (of the Kargyupa school) who had special rights over the area (Hodgson 1876; Rose 1978).

The Svayambhu hilltop is dominated by the large stupa with nine niches to the 5 Directional Buddhas and all but Vairocana's consort. This pattern of cultic orientation found at Svayambhū is followed in almost every modern chaitya in the Kathmandu Valley and is given in Figure III-4.

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<sup>1</sup>The creation of this monument as it stands in its present state is described in the Svayambhū Purāṇa. According to the text, the construction of this stupa is linked to the founder of the Vajracarya order, Śāntikar, a Vajrayana master from India.

Figure III-4: The Directional Orientation Found in Newar Buddhist Chaityas



Each Buddha also has a characteristic mudra:

Vairocana: dharmacakra pravartana, "turning the wheel of the law";  
Amitābha: samādhi, "trance";  
Amoghasiddhi: abhaya, "fearlessness";  
Akshobhya: bhūmi sparsha, "earth touching";  
Ratnasambhava: dāna, "giving".

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The shrine to Amitabha is the focus of most special offerings made to the stupa. (This focus on Amitabha Buddha we will see again in the case of the small chaityas in Asan and in other aspects of Newar Buddhism.)

The stupa itself provides a wide range of devotional possibilities: pradakṣiṇā ("circumambulation"), offerings at the nine niches, a ring of wick lamps and Tibetan-style prayer wheels around the entire perimeter. Usually a Tuladhar layman will combine his activities around the stupa with visits to the many other shrines on the two hilltops.

The pantheon at Svayambhū presents most of the major divinities in the Newar Buddhist pantheon and maintains the deposit of Buddhist history in the Kathmandu Valley.<sup>1</sup> Around the stupa are two Tibetan-style gompas ("monasteries"), the bahā of the Newar shrine attendants, the Buddhācāryas, and major temples to Hārāti Ajimā and Basundhara. Hundreds of small chaitya shrines are present, having been erected by generations of devotees. Śantipur, a restricted Vajrayanic temple thought still inhabited by the first Vajracarya, Śantikar, is located at the north edge of the hillock. Large resthouses suitable for family pūjās and singing bhajans are also arranged around the great stupa.

On the second hillock to the west is the Manjuśrī Stupa. Nearby are two more Tibetan gompas, the Theravadin Anandakutī Vihāra and school, and many more family chaityas. The main stairs up to the hilltop area are also flanked by many shrines and, near the top, images of the five vehicles of the celestial Buddhas enshrined around

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<sup>1</sup>See Map VII-1 for the physical layout of shrines at Svayambhū.



Plate 13: Mahānkāl  
(Note Akshobhya  
Buddha on crown)

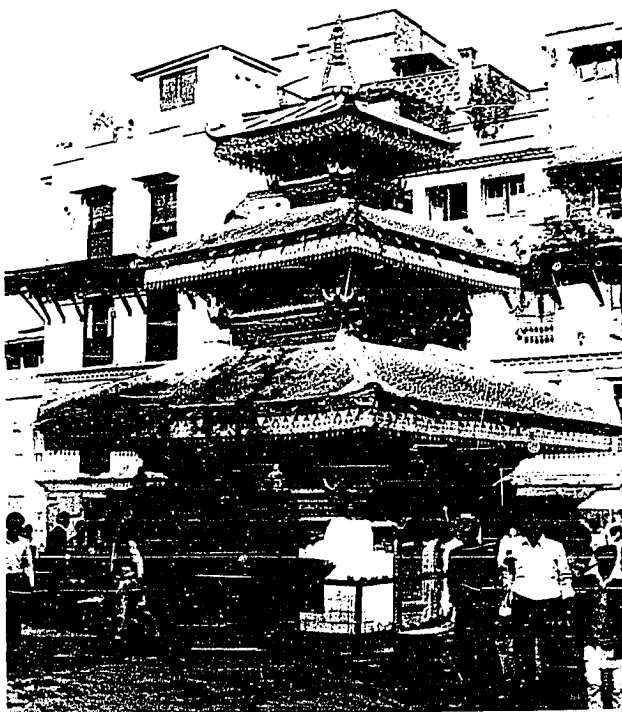


Plate 14: Kel Tol Ajima

the stupa.

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As the Tuladhars themselves point out, their culture is blessed by its proximity to this place, making it especially easy for individuals to live a highly devotion-centered life, make large quantities of punya through worship, and thereby attain a good rebirth. Svayambhū seems to look down over the town of Kathmandu. Its visible presence is a normal fact of life from the Asan rooftops. The Asan Tuladhars look to Svayambhū as the center of their Buddhist devotions on special religious days and daily during the month of Guhlā. Visiting Svayambhū on foot requires an ascent up a steep flight of stairs under a forest canopy occupied by birds and monkeys.

In addition to the many levels layers of religious meaning found here--cosmic symbol, cultic center, locus of power-- Svayambhū should also be seen as an aesthetic refuge from the narrow alleys of the noisy town, a cultural environment with a very different experiential impact.

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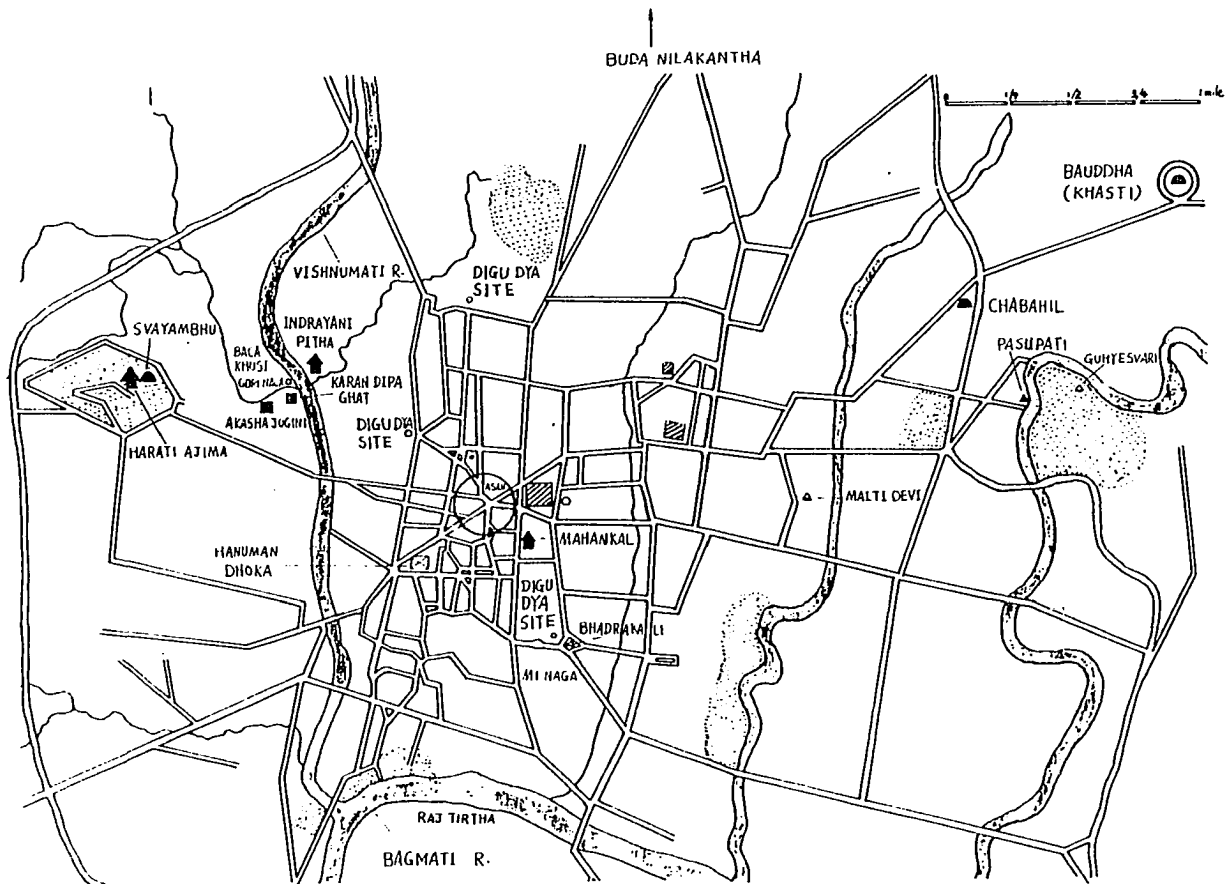
#### MAHĀNKAL

Mahankal is a very popular god found in many different settings. With Ganesh, he guards the entranceways to most bahās. Individuals have also placed him in niches outside of their houses, again in the role of a protector. Although doubtless derived historically from Siva-Bhairav, Buddhists in the Valley have incorporated Mahānkāl into their antheon.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This is made clear iconographically in the placement of the Buddha Akshobhya on Mahānkāl's crown. Vajrācāryas also have a special brata for the worship of Mahānkāl. (See Chapter V.)

Map III-5: Major Religious Landmarks Around Kathmandu City



A major free-standing temple to Mahāṅkal is located just outside the old town boundaries to the east (now just alongside a major thoroughfare). The temple pūjārīs are local Vajrācāryas and they serve a great following among both Hindu and Buddhist devotees, Newars and others, in the Valley. The Newar myth states<sup>1</sup> that this temple was established by a famous Vajrācārya who convinced the deity to stop in the Valley on his weekly trip to India.<sup>2</sup> This temple now lies along one of the busiest roads in Kathmandu just outside of the old town boundaries. Most of the passing drivers of taxis and other vehicles execute a quick salute to this deity as they pass.

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In this discussion of the religious monuments central to Tuladhar religious life, it is also important to indicate several major shrines in the Kathmandu Valley which are not especially significant.

Although its origin is recounted in Newar history, the large

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<sup>1</sup>"There once dwelt in Mantrasiddhi Mahavihār, the present Sabal Baha, a Vajrācārya named Saswat Vajra. One day he was sitting in the sun after an oil massage. At that time a large cloud mass came floating by in the sky, cutting off his sunlight. When Saswat Vajra looked up he saw that the clouds had remained stationary. He then left the bahā and went to Tundikhel, the large open field, for the purpose of bringing down the cloud.

By means of a secret puja and utilizing his mantrasiddhi, he succeeded in bringing the cloud to the field and there saw Mahāṅkal inside of it. Saswat Vajra then worshipped Mahāṅkal with a hymn of his own composition. He discovered that the deity always moves between Tibet and Kashi and made Mahāṅkal promise to stop at this site during his travels in the future. Once the puja was complete, Mahāṅkal blessed Saswat Vajra, went up into the sky, and then disappeared." (My translation from B. Vajracarya 1979).

<sup>2</sup>Local belief also has it that Saturdays are the time when Mahāṅkal's presence is assured so that on this day each week the temple is especially full of devotees.



stupa at Bauddha (called "Khasti" in Newari) is not incorporated into any of the cultural programs among the Tuladhars.<sup>1</sup> The great ancient Hindu center to Siva-Pasupati, the patron deity of the modern Nepalese state, is also largely ignored by the the Tuladhars. As will be seen in the next section, some Tuladhars identify Siva as a Buddha ("Bamesvara Tathagata") and worship him in other forms: in his form as the local god of the arts (Kasa: 1963), or in the refuse pits of their courtyards (Slusser (1982: 227).

Finally, although Tuladhars hardly go to the large "Sleeping Vishnu" shrine north of town called Buda Nilakantha, they assert that this icon bears the image of the Buddha on his crown (which is always kept covered with flowers by the temple attendants), symbolizing his subservience.

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<sup>1</sup>This seems mainly a function of the distance from Asan to Bauddha. Bauddha is visited only by those Tuladhars with former Tibetan trade connections. Although its origins date from Licchavi times (Slusser 1982: 38), later restorations were done by Tibetans in Tibetan style. The area around Bauddha has become one of several settlement centers for Tibetan refugees so that today, in appearance and in ethnic character, the shrine is thoroughly Tibetan.

# KATHMANDU TOWN AND ITS SACRED ORDER<sup>1</sup>

Kathmandu town probably evolved in three stages. First, there was a wall-enclosed nucleus composed of joined settlement clusters which formed around the 18 principle Buddhist monasteries (Skt: mahāvihāra; New: bahā) of Kathmandu. In the second stage, suggested by Gutschow (1978: 1) to have occurred in the XVII Century under Malla rule, a grid system of thoroughfares was superimposed on the older pattern, based upon textual notions in the Hindu Vastu-Śāstra text. The final stage is the still-ongoing expansion of settlement outside the former boundary walls.<sup>2</sup>

As was common in ancient India, the Newar king lived in the center of his capital city. At the center of the horizontal layout and with its chief temple rising above all other buildings, the king's palace, called Hanuman Dhoka, dominates the spatial order of old Kathmandu. Surrounding the palace center was a circle of high caste Brahmin advisors who administered the state and outside of them was a ring of high caste military leaders. As one continued to move out from

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<sup>1</sup>Because the Tuladhars rely on the shrines around Kathmandu town does not mean that they reject the separate cultic worlds arrayed around Patan or Bhaktapur. These places are simply outside of their "country" and its domain of religious order. Most of the shrines that closely encircle the Newar towns do not usually draw outsiders' involvement.

The ongoing (largely oral) tradition in Kathmandu specifies which shrines are proven for puja effectiveness. To the extent that distant shrines develop a reputation and a following, they are more likely to attract Kathmandu devotees.

<sup>2</sup>This trend, due to population increases and migration into the Valley, abolished the ancient division between town as purified and protective sacred order as opposed to the disorder of areas outside.

the center, caste and status ranking decreased. Finally, the town walls formed a barrier between touchable and untouchable groups. Though skewed by many recent changes, this settlement pattern is still visible in contemporary Kathmandu.

The architecturally defined sense of living in a sacred center has been lost since 1934, when an earthquake leveled much of the town and neither the walls nor the town gates were fully restored (Rana 1935). New construction quickly expanded beyond the old boundaries. Kathmandu lost its ordered arrangement of space before any other Valley town. Several festival routes still do articulate this boundary as individuals make a large pradaksiṇā of the town. During Indra Jatra, families in mourning make a circumambulation of the town, called upāko wanegu. In reconstructing the older tradition's order of town settlement, the fact of its present fractured state must be emphasized.

Even though the present king now lives in a palace outside of the old town boundaries and northeast of Asan, Hanuman Dhoka remains the focal point for many royal ceremonies and Newar festivals. All major roads in the old city connect with the palace and most processions still pass by it.

This geographical dominance by the central political powers is muted somewhat by the buildings in the major market centers which reflect their competition with the king in terms of economic power, prestige, and piety. For this reason, Asan is a chief point of reference for the major festival processions, its center is a stage for special performances, and its large temples are major monuments in the city. Before turning to an in-depth examination of this area, we

must cover several major landmarks in the religious geography of the town outside of Asan.

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## MAJOR SHRINES IN KATHMANDU CITY OUTSIDE OF ASAN TOL

### Deities of Healing

According to local folk tradition among the Tuladhars<sup>1</sup>, there are special deities to resort to for specific illnesses. This pantheon is turned to when a "pūjā cure" is sought for an affliction:

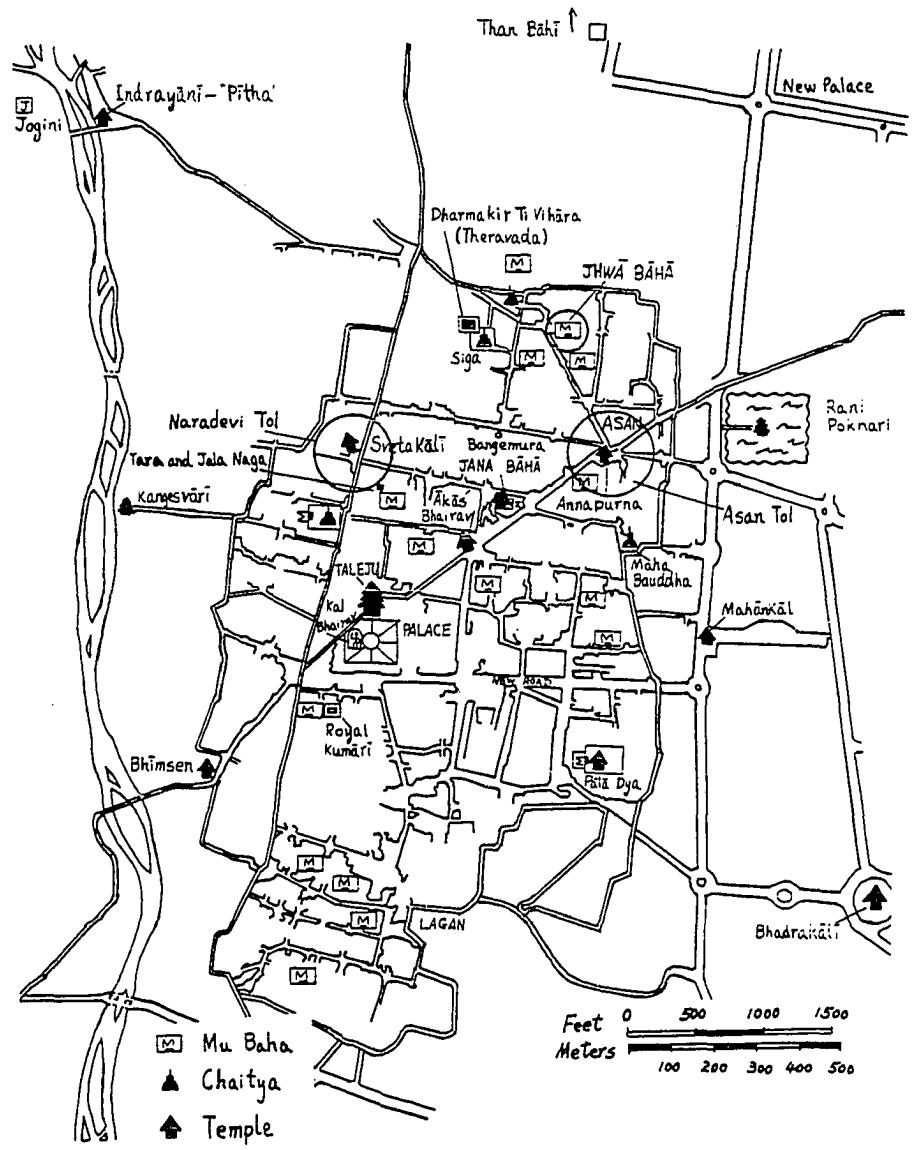
Figure III-5: Summary of Shrines Associated with Healing  
(All are located on the maps that accompany this chapter.)

<u>Illness</u>	<u>Site</u>
earache.....	Rāj Tīrtha
smallpox.....	Ajima-Svayambhū
eye problems.....	Mi Nāga
backache.....	Bhimsen-Bhimsensthan
toothache.....	Bangemura, west of Asan
urinary.....	Pītha-Indrāyānī
skin disease:pimples....	Jala Nāga, Itum Bahā
skin disease:rash.....	Gori Nāga, Baca Khusi
stroke.....	Akasha Joginī/Bijesvarī
fainting.....	Ajima-Svayambhu
severe illness.....	Tārā, Itum Baha
	.....gold lamp, Jana Baha
amputation.....	Sapana Tirtha, Teku
childbirth problems.....	Piga:sthan, Bangemura
children-general.....	Ajima-Svayambhu
child's intelligence....	Asok Vinayak, Bhaktapur
child's walking.....	Makhan Ganesh
hyperactivity.....	Nāsa dya
colic.....	Ajima
early childhood.....	Sun god
abortion.....	Kal Bhairav, Hanuman Dhoka

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<sup>1</sup>The sites listed here are derived from Tuladhar informants. It is likely that a much larger religious geography for healing could be derived from lower class Newars, as they have been less distracted from this type of resort than the Tuladhars. The latter have had the education and affluence to direct their efforts elsewhere.

MAP III-6: MAJOR RELIGIOUS LANDMARKS IN KATHMANDU CITY



Although in no way systematized, the gods which are relevant to the needs of "practical religion" (Leach 1968; Mandelbaum 1964) have their categorical place in the consciousness of laymen, especially women. The goddess Hārati Ajimā is by far the most popular deity associated with healing. Many Tuladhars know the account of her conversion by Shakyamuni Buddha<sup>1</sup> and offer many pūjās to her.

The greatest temple to Ajimā is at Svayambhū, but she is also associated with many other shrines around the city. In connection with her special care of infants, Ajima is also worshipped at the cwasa, places for the deposit of ritual refuse in every tol. (The cwasa is discussed below.)

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#### The 18 Principle Bahās (Map Reference: |M|)

As mentioned above, bahās dominate the town layout, a situation that seems to date back to at least the early Malla period. In Kathmandu there are over one hundred bahās that are organized according to affiliation with the principle eighteen mu ("main") bahās. The grouping of the "major eighteen" refers to the organization of the town's Vajracarya saṅgha and does not indicate the major architectural landmarks at present (Locke 1980: 23).

Bahās are located throughout the old town. As they are always defined by courtyards, they do not dominate the city streets. A survey

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<sup>1</sup>Her conversion changed her nature from a spiteful demoness who killed children to a devotee given the task of healing if she is propitiated. This account dates from ancient Buddhist tradition (e.g. Waddell 1939: 99ff; Bloss 1973: 44) and is known in Tibet (Snellgrove and Richardson 1968: 120) .

of the local neighborhood place names clearly shows the predominance of bahās in defining localities.

The town's Vajracarya community is divided into three divisions, with the Nya ("stone fish") in Asan Tol a dividing landmark.<sup>1</sup> (See below.)

For the Asan Tuladhars, the most important bahās are those (twenty-five or so) that they visit on "Bahi Dya Svayegu", during the Buddhist holy month, Gunla.

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#### Si Gha: Bahā

The large stupa at Si Gha: Baha is a most important landmark for the Newar Buddhists of Asan. Modeled after Svayambhu, it contains an identical order of shrines around the anda, has a highly elaborated Amitabha shrine, and is flanked by a temple to Harati Ajima close by. There is also a model of Santipur, and many family chaityas. Both Newars and refugee Tibetans do pradakṣiṇā and make offerings there in great numbers. The Sakya bahā after which the site is named is a minor monument. Most Sakyas living in central Asan are from the Si Gha: Baha saṅgha.

Si Gha:'s contemporary importance is due to the presence of two non-Vajracarya Buddhist groups. The first is the Theravadin Dharmakirti Vihara, a monastery for female renunciants called

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<sup>1</sup>The divisions in the Vajracarya saṅgha are given in the following table:

<u>City Area</u>	<u>Sanskrit Name</u>	<u>Newari Name</u>	<u>Legendary Founder</u>
North	Subarnapranali	Thatupin	Vak Vajra
Middle	Kantipur	Dathupin	Surat Vajra
South	Kastamandapa	Kothupin	Manju Vajr

"Anagārikās." As discussed in Chapter IX, Asan Tuladhars are most active in supporting this relatively new institution. The second recent addition is the in-town residence of one of the great Tibetan lamas in the Kathmandu Valley, a part-Newar, Tuton Rimpoche. This lama commands a considerable following among both Tibetans and Newars.

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#### Pālā Dya

In a free-standing temple located in Te Baha, a vary large courtyard in the southeast corner of the old town, Pala Dya receives a wide following among the Tuladhars and is often worshipped in tandem with Mahankal. The Sanskrit name for Pala Dya is Sankata Bhāirav (Slusser 1982: 291).

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#### Lagan

An open field in the southern quadrant of the city, Lagan is a religious landmark because it is the site for the end of the Jana Baha Dya Jatra every year. Many Tuladhars go there to see the conclusion of the ratha pulling and to accompany the image of Avalokitesvara on its return to the Asan residence.

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#### Mahabauddha

A large stupa on the eastern edge of the old town, MahaBauddha has the same iconographic form as Svayambhū. At present, this area is where the revivalist teacher and pandit Badri Vajrācārya has set up



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Plate 15: Kal Bhāirav  
outside the Hanuman  
Dhoka Palace

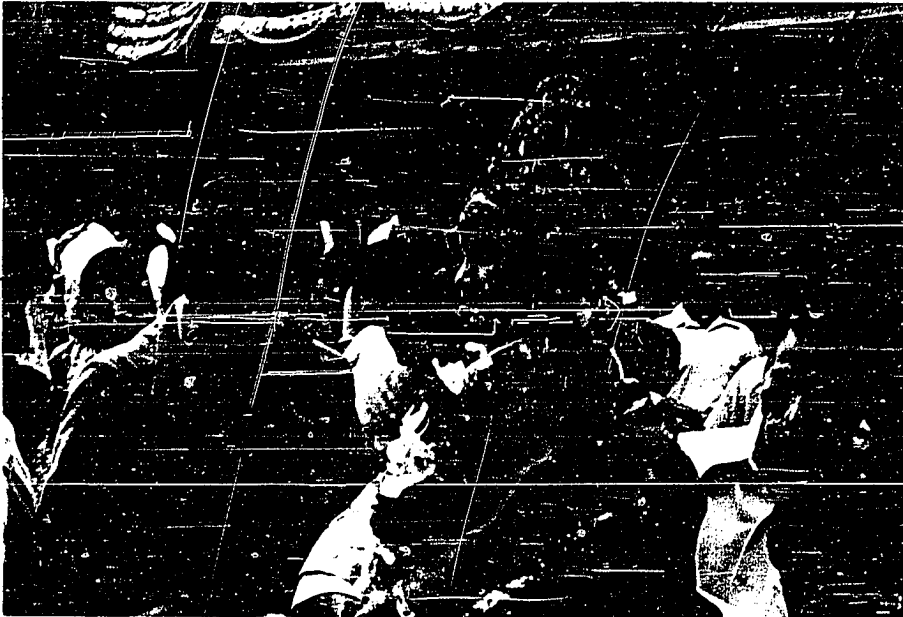


Plate 16: The Royal Kumari Being in Procession

his school for young Vajrācāryas. (See Chapter XI.)

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### Kal Bhāirav

The large statue to Kal Bhāirav located just outside the palace once played an important role in regulating the civil rule of law in Kathmandu. In the case of a disagreement, disputants would have to agree to go before this large, black, and fearful image to swear an oath on the truthfulness of their testimony. The belief was that this Kal Bhairav would immediately slay a liar. Kal Bhāirav still commands respect and following among the Tuladhars and it is rare to see some pass without doing nāmaskar, a gesture of respect.

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### Sveta Kali/Naradevi

A large three storey temple to Kali in the western quadrant of town, Naradevi is one of the aṣṭamātrkāś, and strongly patronized by the Naradevi Tuladhars who live around the area.

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### Bhimsensthan

Located in the southwest area of town, this temple is the largest monument to the god who is regarded as the protector of merchants.<sup>1</sup> As such, several Tuladhar guthis make special offerings there. This god's

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<sup>1</sup>Every twelve years and up to 1968, this temple sent a representative on a journey to Lhasa where a festival was held in this deity's honor among the Newars trading there (Bista 1978).

ability to heal those with injured backs has already been mentioned.

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#### Akash Bhāirav, Indracok

This unusual second-story temple has a large head of Bhairav as the main image. Located on a main crossroads connected to Asan, this temple is frequently passed by Tuladhars and often the object of offerings.

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#### Kumārīs

Newars have a tradition under which prepubescent girls, most of whom are from Buddhist castes, serve pre-menarche terms as incarnations of female deities at special shrines in Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur (Allen 1975). The most famous is the Royal Kumārī who inhabits a special temple near the Hanuman Dhoka palace. Tuladhars make special trips to make offerings to her there and she comes to Asan for her ratha jātrā and to attend the major yearly ceremonies of the Jana Bahā Avalokitesvara festival.

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#### ASAN TOL AS RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT

In the course of tracing the religious geography of the Kathmandu Valley seen from Asan Tol, we have followed the contracting rings of shrines down to the perimeter of Kathmandu town itself. Once we pursue this methodology further, the next center that must be held constant

is the individual's house. Just as, on the macro level of town, the king's palace as town center is the chief reference point that gives the outside order meaning, so for the neighborhoods, the household center is the reference point in the arrangement of religious geography.

The following discussion is made with reference to map III-7, on which all monuments presented have been noted.

### Major Religious Monuments

This survey of the major religious monuments in the study area presents the chief features of the bahās and temples. The purpose is to document the specific characteristics of the religious environment in which the Tuladhars live.

#### 1. The Bahās

Bahās are the architectural and cultic centers for the Vajracarya and Bare/Sakya saṅghas, the caste-defined hierophant communities of Newar Buddhist tradition. Every bahā has a main ground-level shrine with a publically worshipped divinity, usually Akshobhya Buddha, called the kwāpā dya.<sup>1</sup>

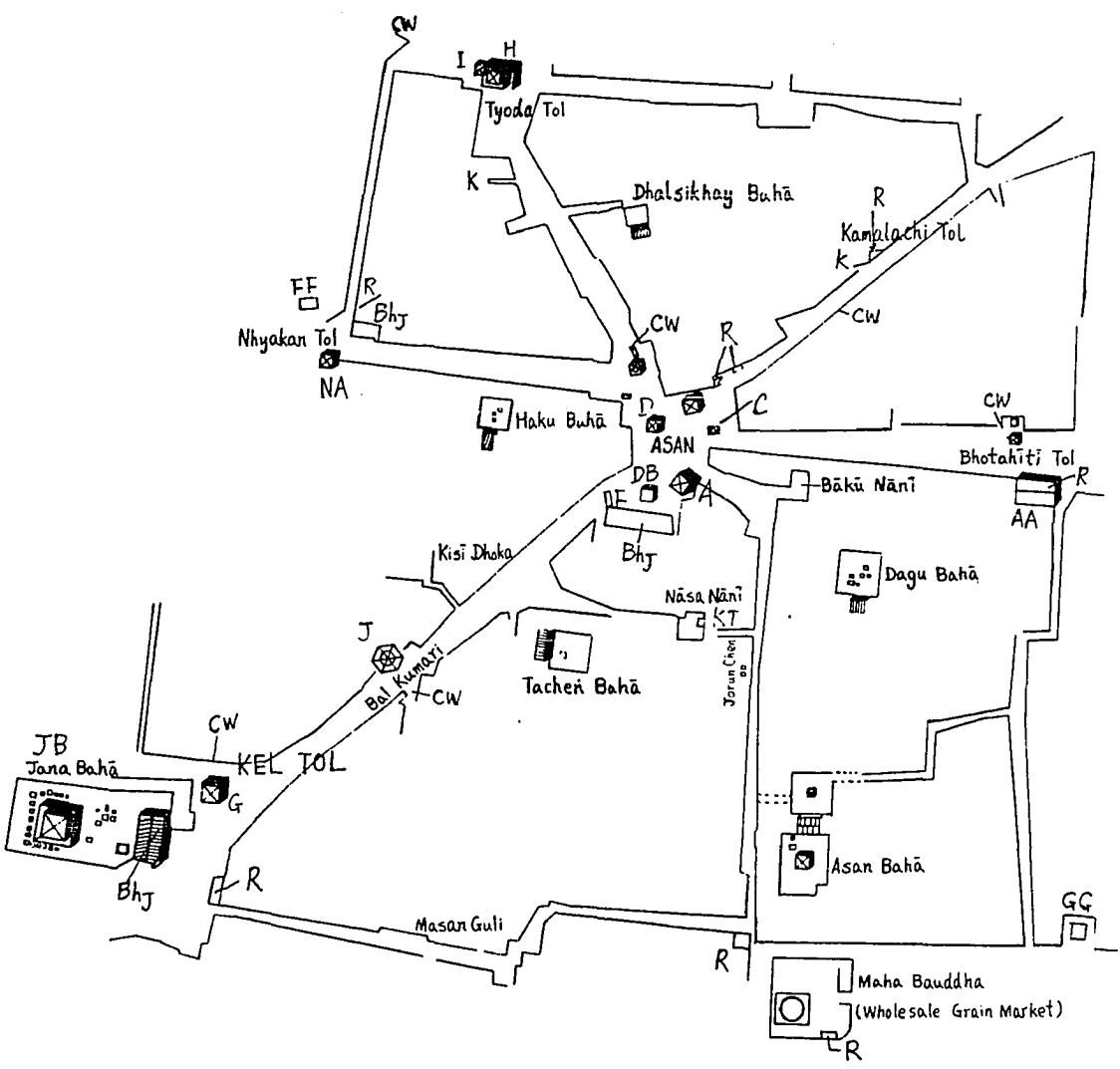
There are often esoteric cults in the bahā which are restricted to initiated members and their wives. According to varying systems of rotation, every family unit must have someone serve for a standard period as the daily pūjārī for all the bahā divinities.

Vajracaryas may live anywhere, though most reside in either the

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<sup>1</sup>This is a term derived from the old Newari kwācā pālā devatā meaning "Sangha protector god".

Map III-7: Survey of Major Religious Monuments in Asan Tol



main bahā or in one of it's satellite affiliates called sakha bahas ("branch bahā"). There are over 65 sakha bahās in Kathmandu, though not all of their residents are Vajracaryas. The situation is further complicated by the fact that some of the mu bahās have a mixed membership of both Vajracaryas and Sakyas. In these bahās, both groups share in the rotating responsibility for performing the daily rituals to the bahā's main deities.

A second independent type of bahā is the kacca bahā. Far fewer in number, these are the cultic centers for the Sakya caste. Architecturally and organizationally they are similiar to the mu bahās.

Today bahās are residential courtyards, with the mu bahās being predominantly the home of Vajracaryas and the sakha bahās less homogeneous. Most Newar Buddhists believe that the bahās were once monasteries which housed a sangha of celibate monks. ("Sangha" is still used to refer to the individual groups affiliated with the eighteen mu bahās.) When the Vajrācāryas married --according to the popular belief, due to a losing debate with the Hindu sanyāsīn Śankarācārya-- they had to transform their monasteries to domestic residences. Although this history is very unlikely, the architectural layout of the bahās and the surviving rituals done there do suggest that there was once a monastic tradition in the Valley similiar to Indian Buddhist monastic traditions.

Plate 17: Haku BahāPlate 18: DhalShikva Bahā

The elaborate shrine complexes remain and the bahās of Asan (as elsewhere throughout the Valley) serve as remarkable repositories of Newar traditions in iconography, the fine arts (wood carvings, metal work, stone sculpture), and for texts (Joseph 1971).<sup>1</sup>

Each bahā is different, a product of its patrons and specialists. Yet we can identify a unity in bahā forms that is shared by our six cases in Asan. We describe this typical pattern for a mu bahā, summarize the data on the six bahās in Asan, and then turn to a case study description of Dagu Baha, a sakha bahā.

#### A Portrait of a Typical Mu Bahā in Asan

Walking along the public thoroughfare, one notices a torāṇa over the narrow house passageway which is flanked by two stone lions. Just inside the tunnel in niches on the opposite walls are images of Ganesh and Mahāṅkal, who guard the bahā compound.

A three storey main building stands across the courtyard opposite the entrance passageway. On the ground floor is the kwāpā dya and above are wooden windows with decorative carvings. In the courtyard is an old whitewashed stupa that the Newars call an "Asok chaitya". Other more modern chaityas may be in this courtyard as well. A small pit, the stone shrine to Śiva-in-the-refuse-heap, "Luku Mahadya", is located to the right of the shrine door in the courtyard.

The door to the shrine of the kwāpā dya is flanked by two bhikṣus holding fly wisks and surmounted by a torāṇa with the

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<sup>1</sup>This conserving feature is most striking architecturally: as the houses surrounding the bahā building have been rebuilt with cement, glass, and steel, the bahā facade in brick, wood, and stone survives alongside. This situation is a literal, physical metaphor for the conserving nature of religious traditions generally; here they preserve the older style of Newar architecture that is being supplanted by more modern building materials.



in its central position. The kwāpā dya is usually a Buddha (most commonly Akshobhya, the eastern directional Buddha) or, less commonly, the Bodhisattva Padmapani - Avalokitesvara. Inside the shrine are also other deities and the essentials for the daily rituals to the kwāpā dya.

The bahā's āgam dya is located on an upper floor that is reached by stairs inside the bahā building. This secret Vajrayana deity, usually Hevajra or Herukasamvara, is accessible only to initiated members of the sangha. The upstairs shrine also contains all of the bahā's cumulative tradition in texts, paintings, and other cultic objects.

The outer facade of the bahā is decorated with wood carvings of many sorts, the most common being the pūjādevīs (Van Kooji 1977).

The windows are also elaborately carved. The roof of the bahā is distinguished from other buildings by its Gajur finial in the shape of a stupa.

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With the exception of those living in them, the bahās of Asan tol are not central foci in the daily religious life of the Tuladhars.<sup>1</sup> Some laymen will occasionally visit a bahā kwāpā dya nearby, but this is rare. Other than this type of attention, it is only the Tuladhar musical group, the Gunla Bajan, that leads special devotional attention to the bahās.<sup>2</sup>

It is in the bahā courtyards, then, that one finds the strongest expression of Newar Buddhist culture. Only individuals living in the

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<sup>1</sup>As mentioned above, Jana Baha is the center of Buddhism in town because of the Avalokitesvara temple, not the bahā's kwāpā dya.

<sup>2</sup>During the month of Gunla, the bājan will visit several Asan bahās daily in its monthly processions, and on one day, Bahī dya Swāyegu, visit over thirty of the city bahās in a day-long program. See Chapters IV and VII for a further discussion of these activities.

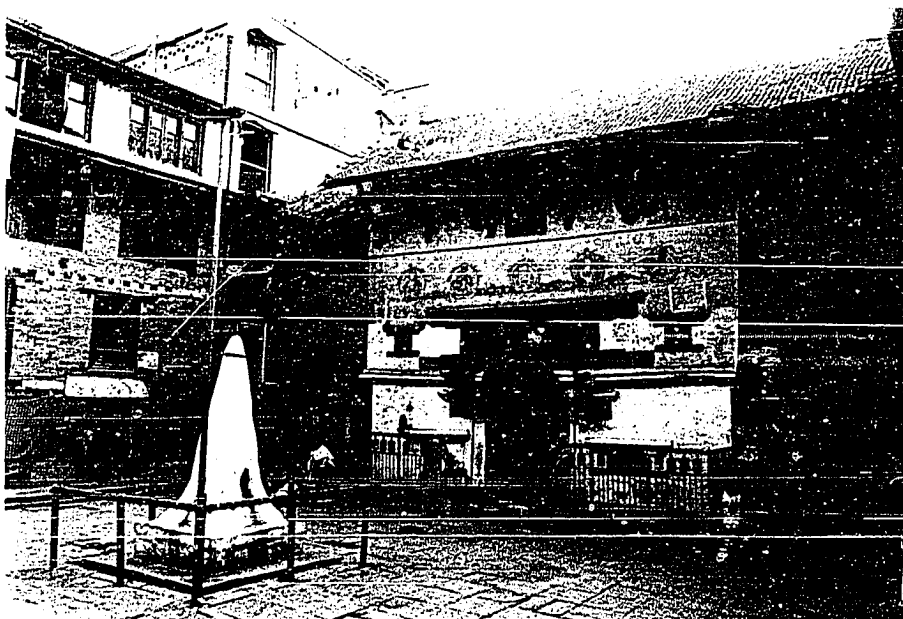


Plate 19: Asan Bahā

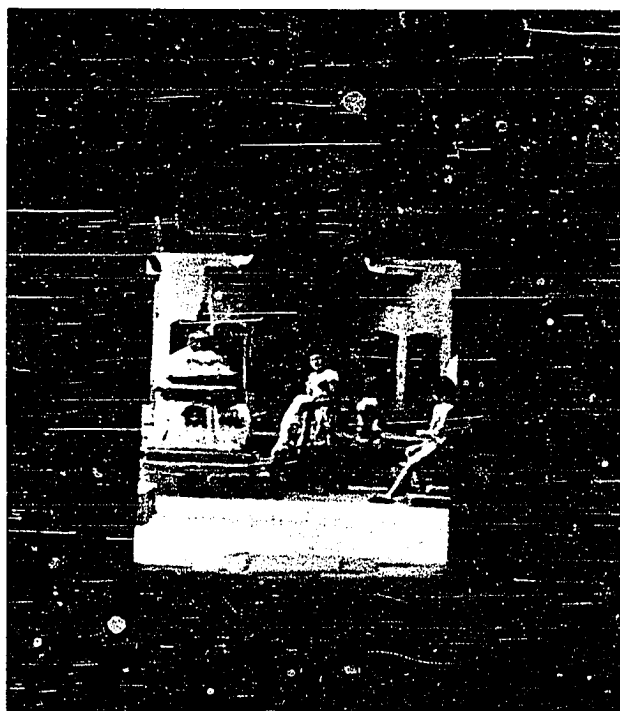


Plate 20:  
Entrance Passageway to  
Dagu Bahā

bahās reside in a fully Buddhist architectural/cultic environment. In Asan less than 15% of the population lives on these courtyards. In Appendix C, we summarize all of the essential historical information about the bahās located in the study area.

### A PORTRAIT OF DAGU BAHĀ

We present a detailed description of Dagu Bahā and its daily religious life as a case study in the religious environment of a lay-dominated Newar bahā.

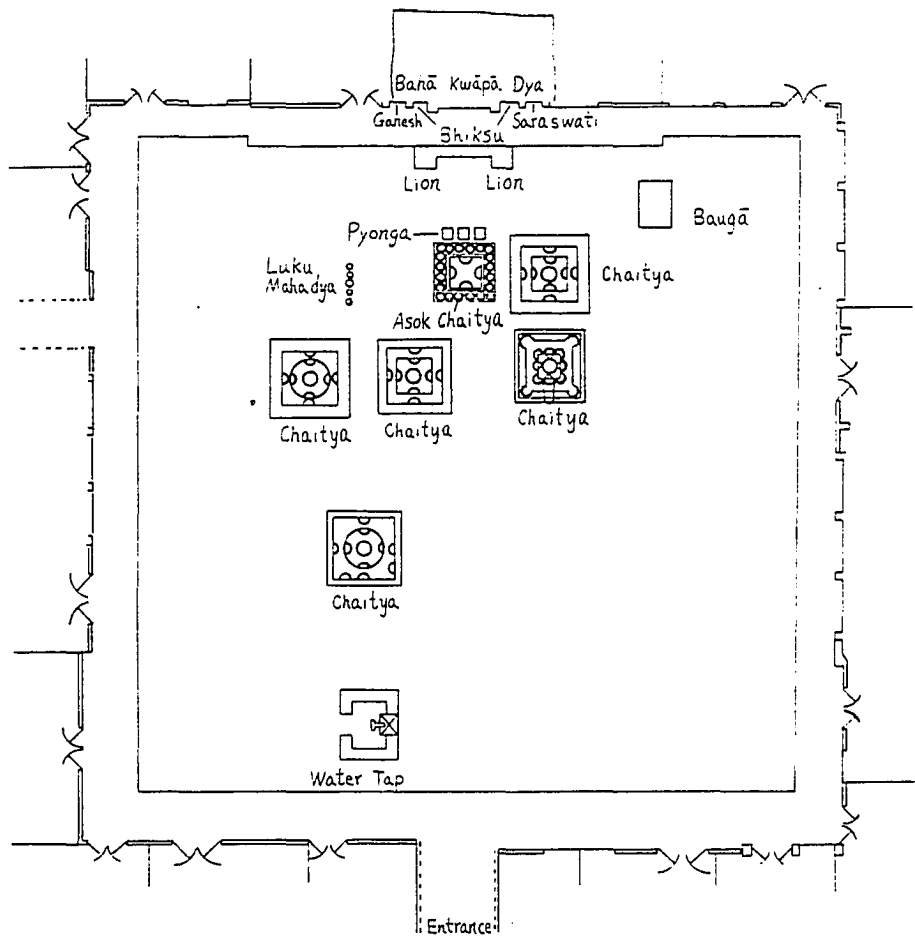
To enter Dagu Bahā, one must turn off the main street in Bhotahity into a lane that passes under a house and next to Nati Vajrācārya's resthouse bookstore. After going another fifty feet straight ahead through a narrow courtyard, passing several house entranceways on the right and a small courtyard with a closed well on the left, one must bend down again to walk through the final passageway that brings one to the Dagu Bahā compound.

Standing just inside on the raised plinth that rings the square space, one faces the kwāpā dya directly across the courtyard. (You in effect bow to this shrine when bending to traverse the passageway.)

Looking around the fifty foot square courtyard, one sees the eleven entrance doorways for the fifteen family units living here. Most buildings rise to over four stories. This vertical dimension and the rows of upper storey windows give the impression of the bahā courtyard being a theatre. (It is just this when there is something happening in the courtyard as everyone inside comes to fill up the available window space.)

There is no architectural unity. Old plaster, brick walls, and delicately carved windows are juxtaposed with grey cement and crude ironwork grills. Corrugated iron roofing material vies with the older roofing tiles made of clay. Yet even with the anarchic mixture of styles, old and new, the whole is an interesting visual montage.

Map III-8: Dagu Bahā



Looking around the courtyard, to the left is a tap stand, where the city water flows several hours each morning and evening. Closer to the kwāpā dya stands a group of six chaityas that rise from rectangular bases. The monuments here represent the patronage of past generations of the families still living on the courtyard. Except for one, the style is roughly similiar and of relatively recent origin, i.e. no more than 150 years old. These chaityas share a common general design shared with most of the other free-standing chaityas in Asan: a rectangular base decorated with the lokapalas of the four directions; surmounting this, a lotus base on which the Buddhas of the four directions sit, back to back, following the order at Svayambhū; rising above them, a small stupa topped with a 13 level spire. The total height of any of the chaityas does not reach over 6 feet. There is considerable variation in how the details of these monuments are rendered. One common variant on this design turns the lower half of the chaitya into a stone temple, the niche shrines of which house the Bodhisattvas of the four directions, alligned under their "family" directional Buddha; this base is then surmounted by the back to back directional Buddhas.<sup>1</sup>

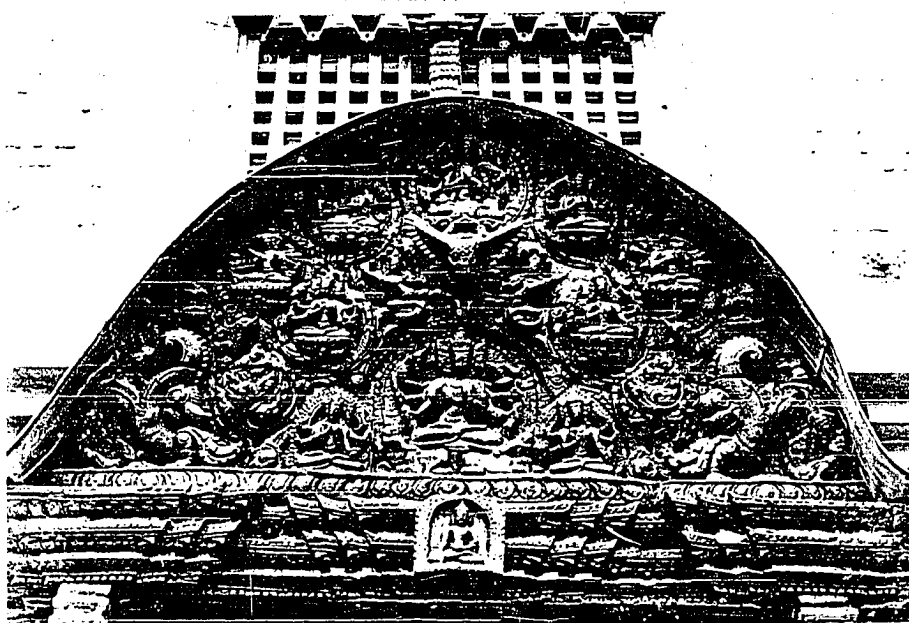
The exception to this style chaitya in Dagu Bahā is the Asok chaitya that is located directly in front of the kwāpā dya entrance. A short whitewashed stupa twenty-eight inches high and two feet in diameter, it is surrounded by a raised rectangular stand which holds twenty-two brass wick lamps. There are very small shrines to the directional Buddhas in incised niches. Residents insist that this is the oldest chaitya in the baha and so it seems.

To the left of the Asok Chaitya, facing the kwāpā dya, is a line of five slightly raised stones. These are the bahā's "Luku

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<sup>1</sup>One must emphasize both the stylistic unity of these chaityas and while noting that there are no two exactly alike among the fifty-five we surveyed in Asan Tol.

Plate 21: Dagu Bahā:  
Asok Chaitya



+ Plate 22: Dagu Bahā: Torāṇa

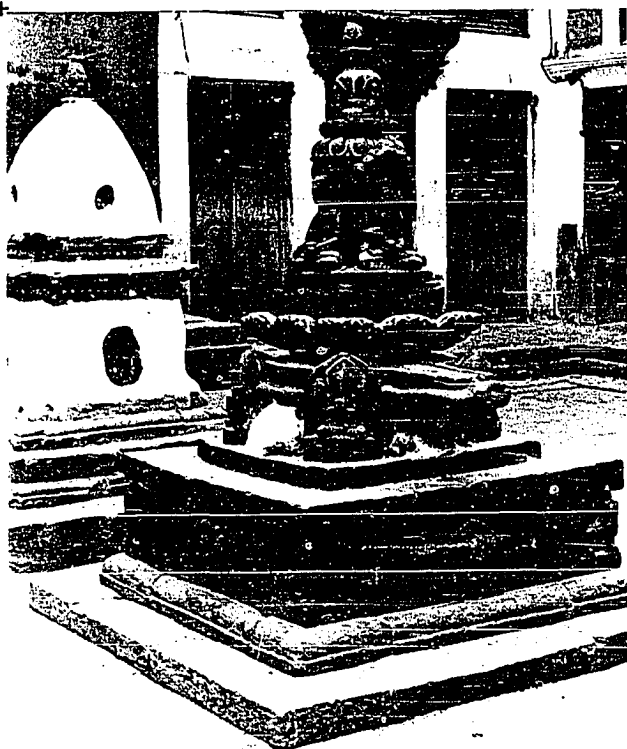


Plate 23: Dagū Bahā:  
Directional Buddha  
Chaitya



Plate 24: Directional Bodhisattva Chaitya

Mahadya", Siva of the refuse heap.<sup>1</sup> To the right of the AsokChaitya is a stone pit, the Bhau gā . The residents deposit offerings to the directional protectors, demons, and bhuts at both places. A series of three carved holes, pyon gā: fall between the Asok Chaitya and the raised plinth of the Kwāpā dya shrine. shraddha offerings for departed ancestors are left here, as discussed in Chapter VI.

Passing between the two stone lions that guard the kwāpā dya and ascending up to the plinth by means of a single stone stair, one reaches the bahā facade. Two stone carved bhikṣus with yak tail wisks flank the entrance to the inner shrine. Ganesh is placed outside of these and to the left; an image of Saraswati is on the outside right. The entrance area is articulated by elaborately carved wood and brasswork; behind a thigh-height restraining barrier (to keep out dogs) are two sets of doors that close by means of an old Nepali lock. Each door has a large eye painted on it.

The torana above the door depicts a small pantheon of protectors and multi-armed manifestations of the Buddha Akshobhya with his consorts. Like most baha toranas, the central figures are flanked by makaras and overarched by either Garuda or his relative cheppa (Van Kooji 1977) in concert with worshipful nāgarājās. (As with the chaityas, much variation is possible given this general order.) Here in Dagu Bahā, most of the carved torana images have been damaged, some beyond recognition. Efforts to coat the sal wood exterior with varnishes have, in fact, further hastened their deterioration.

The area inside the kwāpā dya shrine is normally accessible only to the Vajrācārya pūjārī who performs the daily pūjā. (After undergoing special purifications, Tuladhars may also enter.)

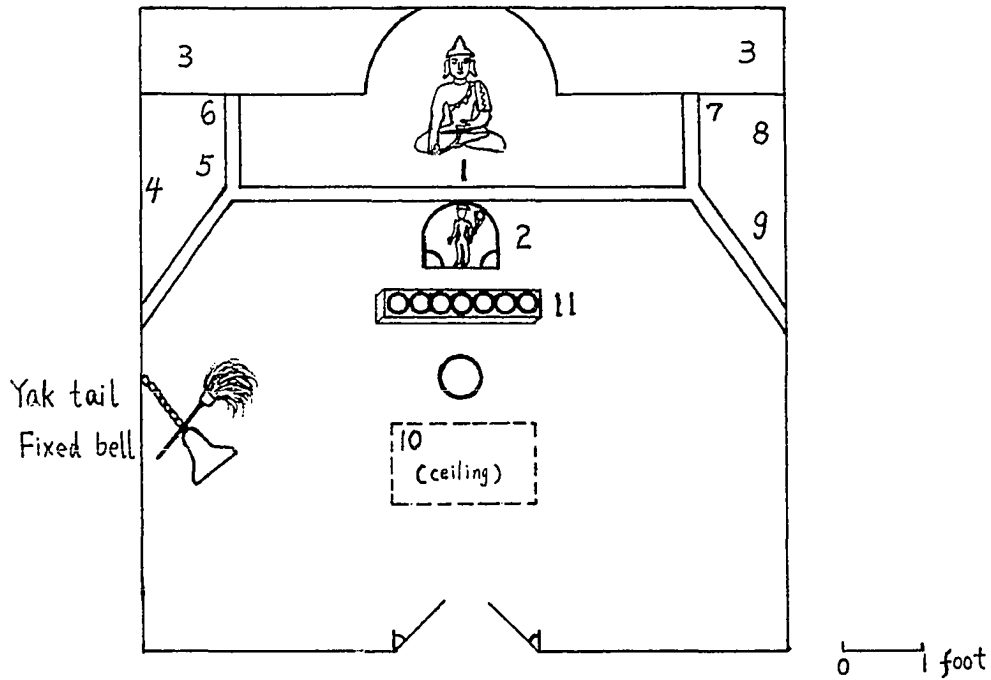
The images here present a small pantheon of Mahayana deities. On a raised stand is Akshobhya, a three foot high, newly restored clay

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<sup>1</sup>This common Newar shrine may represent a textual tradition in which the Bodhisattva Vajrapani defeats Siva-Mahadeva (Snellgrove 1959: 209).



Map III-9: Kwapa Dya Shrine of Dagu Baha



- 1 Akshobhya Buddha
- 2 Padmapani Avalokitesvara
- 3 Bhikṣu
- 4 Mañjuśrī
- 5 Small metal Chaitya
- 6 Padmapani Avalokitesvara
- 7 Padmapani Avalokitesvara
- 8 Small metal Chaitya
- 9 Tara
- 10 Brass Visvavajra mandala
- 11 Shelf with water offering bowls

image, painted in the Tibetan style. He is flanked by two painted bhiksus, two images of Padmapani, a metal stupa (left) and a small image of Tara (right). On the floor closer to the doorway is another stone image, 20 inches high, of Padmapani. A short railing for seven water bowls is located in front of this image. A brass maṇḍala with crossed vajras (viśvavajra), in shallow relief, hangs on the ceiling above this image. A small table that holds the paraphenalia for

the Vajracarya's daily ritual (yak tail, bell, two water vessels, tray) is arranged along the side wall.

The āgam dya of the bahā is located in a room upstairs, on the third floor, the only other shrine space in the building which is otherwise used as the Vajracarya family's domestic dwelling. Several resident Tuladhar families use the bahā's āgam dya for offerings to their own āgam dya, as theirs have been stolen.

Several houses in the bahā have niche shrines which house protective deities. Most have the characteristic religious entranceway decoration, as described under the discussion of the Newar house below. Two shrines for local nāgas, at abandoned well sites, round out the religious geography in this representative bahā.

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## THE MAJOR TEMPLES

Our presentation of the temples in the research area begins from the central area of the market and moves toward the periphery.

### 1. Annapurna (Map reference: A)

Located in the heart of central Asan, this temple to Annapurna is a key religious landmark. The Tuladhars call this divinity "Asan bhulu dya" and identify her as one of a series of bhulu goddesses in

Kathmandu town. She is also known by other names in the inscriptions: Yogambara and Gyanesvari. The icon itself is a silver kalash pot.

The temple has three roofs. On the struts are carved images of the aṣṭamātrkāś interspersed with their Bhairav consorts. The shrine bears witness to multiple layers of Tuladhar patronage seen in the gilded roofs, multiple torāṇas, elaborate decorative motifs, and ornaments within the shrine itself.

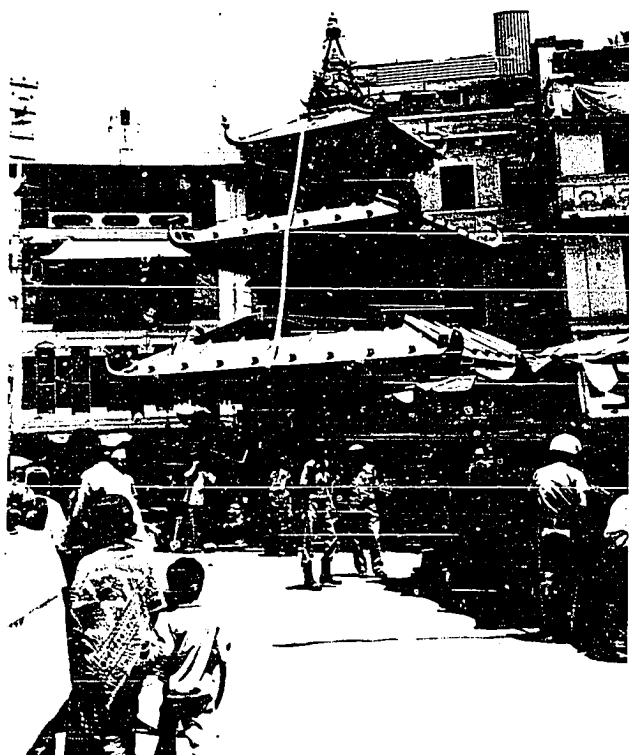
The myth associated with the origin of this temple links Asan with Thimi, a town five miles to the east, and the famous temple to Annapurna in Kashi (Benares) (Eck 1982). As told to me by an informant:

Long ago, the King of Thimi decided to bring the famous goddess Annapurna from Kashi. To do so, he sent a group of ministers and bearers there to bring a kalash pot with her presence in it. This was done but the purohit in India gave them a warning saying that the bearers must not let the pallanquin in which the kalash was placed touch the ground. Their mission would not be successful, he said, if this happened. So they made a festive procession, took every precaution, and brought the kalash into the Kathmandu Valley.

Now at that time, the area where Asan Tol is today was a small grove. Thinking that the mission had succeeded with their town only a two hour walk away, the minister in charge was no longer observant. When two of the bearers suddenly became desperate to piss, they stopped in the grove for an instant to do so. Once they placed the pallanquin on the ground, they were unable to lift it again, even after repeated tries. Therefore, the temple to Annapurna Devi was built where it still stands today.

The temple has two types of attendants. The first is a Vajrācārya priest from Ta Che Bahā who does the daily nitya pūjā here and for the large Ganesh temple across the market every morning. The second is a Jyāpu group which, by rotation, handles the day-long pūjā exchanges

Plate 25: Annapurna  
Temple



+ Plate 26: "Above Ground Archeology", Asan Tol

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with laymen. During the goddess' yearly festival, special sacrifices are performed by a third group, the Hindu Newar tantric priests, the Karmacaryas, who are also the pūjārīs of the royal Taleju cult. Annapurna accepts blood sacrifices and liquor offerings, but the former may only be presented outside to her guardian lion. For her festival, soon after Dasain, two moveable images are carried around Kathmandu in a pallanquin for three days.

As is typical for most great Newar deities, Annapurna also has a dya chen, "god's house", which is located on the eastern boundary of the study area. (Map reference "AA") The festival gear and other properties of the goddess are kept here. The dya chen's inner courtyard is the site of the Jyāpu attendants' yearly feasting occasions; it's outer precincts turn into stores by day, a resthouse sheltering pilgrims by night. This building is noted for its elaborately carved brass windows and woodwork; at present its inner rooms are in a precarious state.

On an average day, over six thousand people daily divert their path through the market to pass around this temple in pradaṣiṇā. The ringing of the bell at the edge of the perambulatory is one of the characteristic and everpresent sounds in central Asan.

The Asan Tuladhars consider themselves the chief devotees of Annapurna. They have donated many things to the temple, right down to the silver pūjā trays. As discussed in Chapter VII, they also play their Dhapa drums before her for a month each year, perform special devotional compositions (gwara) in the Gunla Bājan (which only they play), and sponsor special pūjās to her financed by private guthis.

Up to the earthquake of 1934, local residents respected the

customary religious law which decreed that no building in Asan could look down upon the Annapurna temple for to do so was thought to show disrespect to the goddess.<sup>1</sup> After one Tuladhar merchant rebuilt his house a few feet higher than this mark in 1939, most of the others eventually followed suit. As we explore further in Chapter XI, this is a graphic symbol of the phenomenon called "modernity".

## 2. Ganesh (Map Reference: B)

The two storied temple to Ganesh, the elephant-headed god, faces Annapurna and enjoys a wide following by both Hindus and Buddhists. Shrestha merchant patronage is more in evidence here, especially in the last major building to its present form in 1938. The presence of multiple toranas, bells, and other decorations testify to a long history of donations.

This temple is looked after by the same Jyapu group that looks after Annapurna, but there is no special yearly festival. This Ganesh accepts blood sacrifices and liquor.

All Tuladhars do not make offerings to Ganesh at, as some have family traditions associated with other smaller shrines around Asan.

## 3. Asan Nyā (Map Reference: C)

This most famous landmark in Asan actually lies below the ground level, a small stone in the shape of a fish (nyā) surrounded by a

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<sup>1</sup>Looking at this example and others in Newar culture, it seems clear that multi-roof temples characteristic of ancient India and Nepal (which were later transmitted to east Asia) have their origins in this need to push the deity's roof above all domestic buildings. This architectural form expresses hierarchy and preserves the deity's purity.

carved stone rectangle. Although this shrine is trod on at times by crowds and not infrequently filled with refuse, many respectful devotees take care to pass this shrine in pradakṣiṇā each day.

A still often retold story explains the origin of this shrine. In this account the traditional renown for astrologers is shown:

Once upon a time there lived in Kathmandu a renowned astrologer named Barami. He, thinking to cast a faultless horoscope for his firstborn, hung a bell in the delivery room, instructing the midwife to ring right at the moment of birth. ... [His] calculations revealed that the child was not his own. In shame and sorrow, he renounced hearth and country.....

Meanwhile, the boy child named Dak matured and became an eminent astrologer.

Now it came to pass that the great Indian emperor Asoka assembled all of the famous astrologers of the day to choose the most auspicious date on which to begin a sacred pilgrimage...Not only Dak, but also Barami, a restless wanderer all these years, were there. The other astrologers had hardly put the chalk to slate when Dak announced the proper date. None could improve on it. Barami, chagrined and yet impressed, begged permission to become the brilliant young man's pupil, neither realizing the true relationship.

Both master and pupil joined Asoka's entourage and one day reached Kathmandu. Dak, deciding the time right for testing his pupil's new skills, questioned him: "Tell me which is the next most auspicious day and on it what will fall from the sky, and where will it land?"

Barami made rapid calculations and unhesitatingly replied, "the full moon of Chaitra, at twelve past twelve a fish will fall from the sky in Asan twelve arm's length from the Annapurna temple."

Dak was pleased to find all calculations correct except that the fish, he said, would fall much closer to the temple.

They went to the Asan at the chosen time and the fish indeed fell where Dak predicted. Dak told Barami that his mistake was in neglecting to consider the wind.

Musing on this, Barami recalled neglecting an equally important factor when he once cast his infant son's horoscope, i.e. that he failed to consider the delay in the bell's sound reaching him.

He immediately recalculated the boy's horoscope, realized that the son was his own and that he would be a great astrologer. Soon, the family was reunited. The family Vajracarya informed them that they should commemorate the event of a father being his son's pupil by erecting a monument where the fish had fallen. This was done where it is found today. (Adapted from Slusser (1972), with slight modifications from informants.)

#### 4. Asan Nārāyan (Map Reference: D)

The Vishnu-Nārāyan temple is the remaining major monument in central Asan. The main image of Vishnu is 18 inches high, four armed, with the deity sitting astride his mount, Garuda. Two inner toranas placed above the image are most interesting as they depict the ten avatārs of Vishnu, including the Buddha.<sup>1</sup> Also along the inner walls are images of Śiva/Parvati, the Sun God, and Padmapāni Avalokitesvara.

This temple has no yearly festival and no regular priestly worship. A local Shrestha merchant who has the door key comes on most days to make a simple round of offerings. Through our sampling we determined that this god received less than five percent of the total daily devotional attention in Asan. These facts and the small size of this temple suggests the lesser strength of Hinduism in Asan. The small nearby temple to Śiva/Parvati [Map Reference: E] points to the same conclusion.

#### 5. Bhāirav Pole (Map Reference: F)

A tall bamboo pole with a flag painted with the image of Kal Bhāirav, the fierce manifestation of Siva, always flies over the Asan market. Each year on Maha Astami during the Mohini festival, a

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<sup>1</sup>This was also a theme known in Kashmiri art (Pal 1975: 70). Pal's statement that this motif is unknown in Nepal (1970: 46) is obviously incorrect.



government sponsored pūjārī replaces the old pole and flag and worships the new one by sacrificing a goat.

As Bhāirav is the patron deity of the Gorkhali army and the Shahs, the significance of this yearly rite has a clear political meaning. It is a classical gesture of rule symbolized by the flag flying above all other gods in the market. Most Asan Newars ignore the ritual associated with it; our survey showed that many, especially the women, are not even aware of its presence.

#### MAJOR TEMPLES OUTSIDE THE MARKET CENTER

##### 6. Jana Bahā Dya (Map Reference: JB)

The temple of Karunamaya-Avalokitesvara located in the Jana Baha courtyard is the most important Buddhist shrine in Kathmandu City. Most Tuladhars-- on a family basis and as individuals-- worship at this temple daily. The large two-storey temple has an immense inventory of patronage donations that decorate the building and fill the large courtyard. (Tuladhar giving has been a predominant factor in recent restorations.) The temple is also a center where the Vajrācārya/Sakya priesthood maintains a vigorous agenda of Buddhist ritual throughout the year (Locke 1980: 230ff).

##### 7. Nhyakan Tol Ajimā (Map Reference: NA)

Though renovated in 1960, this three roof temple is largely neglected in daily devotionism. Although its central image is a large amorphous stone, the torana, dated to 1728, has the goddess

"Ugra Tārā" in its center.<sup>1</sup> The likely Buddhist identity of this goddess seems to have been lost and Buddhist Tuladhars in Asan pay no special recognition to this temple. The title "Ajimā", used in popular parlance, reflects the widespread process of goddesses losing their discrete identities. As such they become "Ajimā", the fierce goddess who is worshipped for restoring a child's health and warding off disease, especially smallpox.

Ugra Tara receives no daily priestly offerings. A yearly palanquin festival is held during Panchare. Sponsored by Shrestha shopkeepers, local Jyāpus carrying the image around Kathmandu. Asan Tuladhars are not especially attentive to its passing. The goddess's house across the street (Map Reference: FF) is in ruins.

#### 8. Kel Tol Ajimā (Map Reference: G)

Though often called "Ajimā" in local parlance, here, too, the main image is another deity identified in the inscriptions as Chamunda. Inside this three roofed temple are images to Ganesh, Bhāirav, Kumārī, Nārāyan, and Akshobhya Buddha. The temple struts have carvings of the aṣṭamātṛkās and several erotic panels. This temple has the unusual feature of its shrine being below the ground level. The temple has Jyāpu attendants (Dongals) who work on a one month rotation system. The Karmācārya Hindu pūjārīs stopped doing the daily nitya pūjā long ago, say local residents. The yearly spring festival for this goddess is arranged for by the Dongals during the Panchare festival.

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<sup>1</sup> This is one name of the tantric Buddhist goddess VajraJoginī. (Pal 1981: 70).

The dya che for the goddess is located in MahaBauddha in the southwest corner of the study area. (Map Reference: GG)

The proximity of this Harati "Ajimā" to Jana Baha conforms to the pattern found elsewhere in the Valley-- at Svayambhū, Si Gha:, Bhagawan Bahā-- where the goddess' temple is placed close to a major Buddhist monument.

#### 9. Jwālā Mai (Map Reference: H)

This three roofed temple on the north edge of the study area is largely ignored in the course of daily devotions. The name "Jwālā Mai", "Sacred flame", suggests that it was once associated with a natural gas phenomenon once most common in the Himalayas.

Although restored after the earthquake in 1934, today there is no regular system of priestly puja or temple attendants. (Some informants claimed that Vajrācāryas once did the nitya pūjā.)

A small shrine to Ganesh outside the entrance receives a great deal of ritual attention. (Map Reference: I)

#### 10. Krishna Mandir (Map Reference: J)

This unusual octagonal plan temple, one of few in the Valley, has been consumed by its locality. Houses have been built right to its very walls, making it no longer a free-standing structure. The cultic life has also ended, the shrine to Krishna visited only occasionally by local Hindu laymen. Finally, the downstairs space has been partitioned into small shops by merchants. Although a musical bhajan still uses the upper storey rooms for its activities, this group now assembles only for major festivals.

The present state of this temple and the comparable status of other Krishna shrines in Asan suggests that in the Malla period there was greater interest in Krishna bhakti that has since waned.

#### OTHER IMPORTANT RELIGIOUS LANDMARKS

##### 11. Nāṣa Dya (Map Reference: K)

Each major caste in Asan has a shrine to Nāṣa Dya who is Siva, Lord of the Dance. Before any period of musical performance begins, this god must be worshipped by the performing community. This is the case for the Tuladhars before their festival participation for Gunla, Dhapa Bajan, and Kumar Pyekhan.

In Asan, several shrines exist; for the Tuladhars, the small roofed temple outside Ta Che Bahal (Map Reference KT) is the exclusive focus of their Nāṣa Dya worship.

The myth accounting for Nāṣa Dya's status and the distinctive location of his shrines is told of in the following myth:

One day, Nāṣa Dya gave Bhīm Dya [Bhimsen] a singing lesson, but the latter did not have much in the way of talent. When Bhīm Dya was later practicing on his own, a washerman came by who happened to be searching for his lost donkey. Hearing the sound, the washerman thought it was his lost animal's braying and coming upon Bhim dya asked where the donkey was. Bhīm Dya thus realized that his singing sounded like a donkey's cry.

Just as a bad craftsman quarrels with his tools, Bhīm Dya grew angry with Nāṣa Dya, thinking that he had been badly taught. And so he went off to hit Nāṣa Dya with his club. Seeing him coming, Nāṣa Dya was frightened and ran away but Bhīm Dya chased after him. Fearing for his life, Nāṣa Dya hid himself in a dark place among garbage and filth. This is the reason that his shrines are located in or near such places. (My translation from Kasa 1963: 2.)

Shrines to Nāṣa Dya are usually have three niches. Though most niches are now empty, the centermost niche is Śiva as Naṭarāja ("Lord of the Dance"). He is flanked by Nandi, his bull mount, on the left, and Vindi, another attendant, on the right.

Nāṣa Dya receives only ad hoc offerings, has no regular priesthood, and accepts meat and blood offerings.

## 12. Cwasa Ajimā (Map References: Cw)

Yet another Ajimā, here of the cwasa refuse pit, plays an important role in Tuladhar life. This goddess is thought to be the usually beneficent guardian of newborn children up to until they reach the age of their Janko rite of passage. Offerings to this Ajimā must be left at the cwasa.

The cwasa is also the place where Newars must deposit polluting objects (umbilical cord, death- polluted clothing). There are also various bhūts, prets, and other troublesome spirits are thought to reside here.

There are at least seven cwasas in the study area.

## 13. Nāgas

Almost each locality in Asan has its shrine to a local nāga. Although well water is now not used as a drinking source, wells are still regarded as the chief place to make offerings to these deities. Many of the wells in Asan have been closed over; most of those still open have small images of nāgas carved into the upper rim. According to an old tradition, the Sithi Nakha festival was the day when all wells in the town were to be cleaned and nāgas worshipped. During my

research tenure, we did not even find one case.

Many of the Vajrācārya rituals include special cotton ball offerings, called puñ, to the local nāga. This offering must be placed near the shrine. Nag localities, like the cwasas, are often used in the Vajrayāna rituals and so are well known points in the local religious geography.

#### 14. Resthouses (Map Reference: R)

Resthouses (Newari: palchāy) are built with a religious intention to help other beings, an action that brings punya ("merit") to the donor. These structures are commonly dedicated to a deity and often used for religious functions. The most common of these is the singing bhajan; in Asan, three of the seven resthouses are also used for musical bhajan houses. (Map References: Bhj )

The original function of the phalcāy shelters was to provide shelter for pilgrims and the poor. This custom has been eroded seriously in recent times as individuals or groups have taken them over as privately owned spaces. Many have been turned into shops or locked-off meeting areas. This trend reveals the great need for shop space in the downtown due to population increases and also an attitude which disregards the religious vows associated with the original builder.<sup>1</sup>

This trend also reflects the decline in need for such spaces due

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<sup>1</sup> A common inscription says that anyone harming this religious structure will suffer the same fate as one who commits the five "Mahāpāp" sins (killing Brahman, mother, father, guru, and cow): early death and many bad rebirths.

to demographic changes (outsiders now are more likely to have kin or friends in Greater Kathmandu to stay with), changes in the character of Kathmandu (thefts are feared), and the declining physical structures themselves (some palchāy are delapidated and/or filthy beyond use).

#### 15. DHOBU (Map Reference: DB)

Each major neighborhood has a raised platform, Dhobu, intended for use by dance performers. The fact that these structures are permanent is a clear indication of the high value placed by Newars on dance and theatre. Although the number of traveling masked-dance groups has declined in recent times, the Dhobu has retained its place in the downtown.

Dhobu platforms have always been multi-use spaces. In Asan, it changes from a place suitable for nighttime sleeping for pilgrims into an early morning fruit stand; from this into the space for six daytime shopkeepers who have legal lease rights to sell merchandise there; and finally to an evening gossip center. Until about fifteen years ago, this place as the site where moneychangers sat. when this practice ended, one of the characteristic sounds of Asan disappeared.

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#### NETWORKS OF RELIGIOUS SPECIALISTS

As indicated on the map of Asan's religious geography, specialists also must be considered part of the Tuladhars' religious geography.

Priests. In addition to the Vajrācārya priests who reside in the

bahās, lamas and Theravadin monks have monasteries near Asan and across the Kathmandu Valley. Each offers its own shrines for pūjā as well as a distinct program of ritual service for laymen, the subject of later Chapters.

Mediums. Mediums of various gods are also located across the Valley. For some people, the behavior of "real" mediums when they are possessed along with their revelations and prognostications all constitute a strong pillar of belief in the reality of deities. The location of these mediums represents a widely shared order in the local religious geography. There was one medium who began holding sessions just outside the study area at the end of my study.

Astrologers. Astrological advice is available from a variety of sources in and around Asan. Almost every major event of significance must take the auspicious moment, the seit, into account. The Jyotis or Joshi, therefore, is an important figure for Buddhist laymen as women represent the family in over 80% of the consultations.

Two Vajrācāryas and a Hindu Newar just north of the study area meet the needs of almost all the Asan Tuladhars.

Ayurvedic Baidyas. These practitioners of herbal medicine can play an advisory and supplier role in matters of practical religion, especially in curing. For the Tuladhars, matters of personal health, family well-being, and religious observance are intricately interwoven (Durkin 1982; Stablein 1977: 407).

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### Summary of All Religious Monuments in Asan

Having given summary sketches of the major shrines and temples in Asan, we must provide an overall sense of the religious environment. As part of the research in Asan Tol, we made a detailed inventory of all the ground-level monuments in the study area. This information was recorded on a land survey map; most monuments were also photographed and keyed to the map.<sup>1</sup> The results are summarized in the following tables.

The largest religious structures in Asan are the free-standing shrines and temples:

FIGURE III-7: FREE STANDING RELIGIOUS SHRINES IN ASAN

<u>Divinity</u>	<u>Number</u>
Chaityas	55
<u>Bahā Kwāpā Dyas</u>	7
Vishnu-Nārāyan	6
Śiva liṅga-s	6
Akshobhya Buddha	5
Ganesh	5
Nāṣa dya	3
Krishna	2
Nārasimha	2
Avalokiteśvara	1
Annapurna	1
Bal Kumārī	1
Jwālā Mai	1
Bhāirav	<u>1</u>
	96

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<sup>1</sup>This map is not included with the deposit copy of the dissertation out of consideration to the residents of Asan tol. Thievery of icons has become a major source of conflict in the Kathmandu Valley and I must assume responsibility for my findings. For those interested in further information, contact the author at the Southern Asian Institute of Columbia University where the detailed survey maps have been archived.

From this survey, it is clear that chaityas dominate the architectural space in Asan. Looking at the more comprehensive picture of all shrines in the public and semi-public domain shown in Figure III-8, it is clear that the cultic character expands to include a large pantheon of deities from the Indian tradition.

FIGURE III-8: SUMMARY OF ALL SHRINES IN ASAN TOL

<u>Divinity</u>	<u>Number</u>
Chaityas	55
Ganesh	29
Mahānkāl	22
Garuḍa	22
Vishnu-Nārāyan	19
Haṇūmān	18
Śiva ( <u>lingas</u> -11; niches-8)	18
Buddhas	15
Bhairav	10
Padmapani-Avalokitesvara	9
Tārā	7
Nāṣa dya	5
Bhimsen	5
Sungod-Surdya	5
Krishna	5
Nāgas	5
Vajrapaṇi	4
Luku Mahādya	4
Cwasa Ajimā	4
Annapurna	3
Saraswatī	3
Joginīs	3
Kumārī	2
Mañjuśrī	2
Nārasingh	2
HariHara Vishnu/Devi	1
Skandha	1
Jwālā Mai	1
Pipal Tree shrine	1
Total	<u>280</u>

Characterizing the religious identity of Asan tol using these quantitative means may be facilitated by organizing these shrines

according to a series of rubrics. Although it is very difficult to reach analytical precision using the labels "Hindu" or "Buddhist", we can arrange the shrines in Asan Tol according to the groups who predominate in utilizing them. Under the rubric "Shared", we indicate the groups that tend to offer pūjā more.

TABLE III-9: SUMMARY OF ASAN SHRINES BY RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

STRICTLY BUDDHIST	SHARED		STRICTLY HINDU	
	BUDDHIST	HINDU		
	<----->			
Chaityas-55		Ganesh-29		
	Mahānkāl-22	Garuda-22	Vishnu-19	
			Hanūmān-18	
			Śiva-18	
Buddha-15				
		Bhāirav-10		
Avalokiteśvara-9				
Tārā-7		Nāṣa Dya-5	Krishna-5	
		Bhīmsen-5		
		Sungod-5		
		Nāgas-5		
Vajrapaṇi-4		Cwasa Ajimā-4		
Joginīs- 3		Annapurna-3	Durgā-3	
		Saraswatī-3		
	Kumārī-3			
Mañjuśrī-2			Narasingh-2	
		Skandha-1		
			Harihara-1	
			Pipal tree-1	
			Jwala Mai-1	
86 (32%)	27 (10%)	79 (30%)	28 (10%)	51 (18%)

Besides providing one sample of "above ground archeology" in Kathmandu and a comprehensive summary of the material religious culture in Asan as of 1982, this survey helps to characterize Asan as a diverse religious environment. As in Kathmandu generally, we find

the physical space in Asan Tol structured according to its religious shrines. Even with all of its frenetic activity and crowding, the central market is dominated by large temples and small shrines; chaityas mark off many private courtyards; bahās are interspersed throughout the area. These shrines as cultural media provide a religious backdrop and identity to almost every public area.

The physical geography of Asan also suggests the dominance of Buddhist tradition here. The bahās, the ubiquity of chaityas, and the Vajrācāryas' role as pūjārīs in the major temples all support this view. From the tables above, we know that about 82% of the shrines in Kathmandu are utilized by Newar Buddhists. With the possible exception of the small Narayan temple, there is no large "strictly Hindu" shrine in Asan. Moreover, no Hindu temple in Asan elicits a wide public following. Finally, the Hindu shrines, unlike the bahās, are not part of a living tradition of daily puja by a professional priesthood. This finding is not surprising since this kind of survey in fact measures the cumulative tradition of the residents' patronage and Asan is, according to our surveys in Chapter IV, approximately 60% Buddhist.

Our conclusion that Asan is predominantly Buddhist does not imply that Hindu culture here is trivial. Hindu shrines are distributed widely across the neighborhood but, in contrast to the Buddhist monuments, they seem to be more private and maintained by the donor-family.

The oldest images in our survey were found to be of both traditions, corroborating an image of Newar cultural history that finds ancient Hindu and Buddhist traditions surviving interwoven from Licchavi times onward (Riccardi 1979). We may also conclude that for

centuries the Buddhist majority fully accepted Hindu neighbors and their cults around them.

In this sample , we found monuments in every state--from those carefully maintained to those lodged, apparently forgotten, in the crack of a delapidated wall. Considering only the small niche images, it is clear that their diversity and quality has declined remarkably over the last 100 years. The impression of Buddhist and Hindu Newar culture from this survey is that of physical decay as compared to an earlier period of greater religious elaboration. Some courtyards have been successful at keeping their religious images intact; others have not. It is clear that the present generation of Newars has been unable to maintain the full physical endowment that they have inherited from the past.

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#### RELIGIOUS ORDER IN THE NEWAR BUDDHIST HOUSE

To complete the picture of concentric circles in the religious geography surrounding the Tuladhar layman in Asan, we must conclude by presenting the Newar house as the innermost circle.

#### Foundations

This areas' being sacred space is made clear in the rituals done at every stage when erecting a new house. The auspiciousness of the vacant lot for the family is checked by an astrologer through an assessment of the soil from the boundary areas. Before construction begins, a nāga pūjā is performed to safeguard the firmness of the

foundation. After the topmost roof beam is in place, the Thāy mā pūjā is performed, during which a goat can be sacrificed. (This sacrifice is not done now in most Tuladhar households.) Finally, once the house is ready for occupation, the family calls their Vajrācārya purohit to do a bau biyegu pūjā to drive out any evil spirits that might have come into the house space during the construction. With the main roof beam as center, the ritual invokes the aṣṭamātrkāś to protect the house and expell any demons. The men of the house carry away separate offering bowls to each mātrkā and to Bhairav, depositing them at special places according to the eight cardinal directions. Amulets are placed over the doors of each room and outside on the entrance lintel. The reconsecration of the protective amulets is repeated yearly during the Gantha Muga festival.<sup>1</sup>

### Architectural Layout

The traditional Newar house in Asan is at least four stories, made with baked brick walls and foundations, framed with wooden beams, and is roofed with baked clay tiles. Cement and corrugated iron roofing have introduced new possibilities in the construction media, just as more modern flooring has replaced floors coated with a clay/cow dung mixture. Still, the traditional order in house space has been largely continued.

The ground floor, being damp and ill-lit, is used for storage and

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<sup>1</sup>The Sthirobhavavakya, a Newar text read at the consecration of a house, cites a long list of identifications between house structures, tools, etc. and specific deities (Slusser 1982: 421). With a few exceptions, these were not known by my informants. This is a typical case in which the ideas set forth in the old Newar traditions are preserved in the layman's midst (the text is read at the consecration), but which are not understood by anyone present.

Plate 27: House  
Foundation Nāga Pūjā



Plate 28: Buddhist House  
Entranceway

most houses have the bathrooms there. (Houses on the market may have shop space on this floor.) On the second and third floors are the sleeping quarters and, quite often, a common room for socializing. The fourth floor is usually the kitchen area. Many Tuladhars have their āgam and/or pūjā room in an adjoining room or on a floor above the kitchen. The rooftop area of the house is also utilized as living space. As a quiet alternative to the crowded bazaar, this space is used for many activities, from sunbathing to kite flying.

As this arrangement suggests, the upper regions of the house are the most lived in and the most significant. Access to the kitchen and puja room is restricted to a small group of family relations and same-caste friends. The āgam room is open only to Nikhan-initiated adults; darśan of the Āgam Dya is possible only for those in the family with the tantric Dekkha initiation. Although the Tuladhars are less fastidious than their Hindu Shrestha neighbors with regard to pollution and purity, they still restrict lower caste individuals to the lowest floors, guard the ritual purity of the house, and observe the ritual customs of passage on the stairways.<sup>1</sup>

As an individual's and family's ritual center, the house is regularly purified and fortified. If properly maintained, the house insures a stable environment that enables a family to maintain it's health, prosperity, and religious duties.

Starting with the ground floor, we will ascend into a Tuladhar house, noting the religious elements that define the home space as a

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<sup>1</sup>A person's feet should never be on the same ladder above anyone, especially one who is senior in age. If this situation occurs, the Newars call it hācan gāye and it is taken as an insult.



religious environment. In Appendix B, we include drawings of two Tuladhars who note all rooms and kin dwelling.

## GROUND FLOOR

Piku luku: A circular lotus shaped carved stone located on the ground outside the main house entrance, the piku luku is a frequent point for making ritual offerings: it is the very first place where the family places offerings at the time of any puja in the house.

This stone is thought by most to represent Kumar, Ganesh's brother, and his other son. Offerings placed here are thought to assuage the hunger and anger of any spirits dwelling in the vicinity who might otherwise be inclined to interfere with the rituals.<sup>1</sup>

Door Guardians: Images of guardian deities such as Mahānkāl, Ganesh, Garuḍa, or Vajrapani are frequently placed in niches in the outside wall around the house entrance. They will receive offerings as part of the family's daily puja round outside the house.

Entranceway: One firm indicator of an Asan family's religious identity is the decoration around the front door area. Tuladhars have an upper frieze with images of the Five Directional Buddhas, showing Vairocana in the middle, the aṣṭa maṅgala<sup>2</sup>, all flanked by the sun and

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<sup>1</sup>In Kaṭha, an eighth Century text (the Nīlamata Purāṇa) mentions a belief that if the god Skanda is worshipped regularly in the home, children will not be sick (Kumari 1968: 141; Pal 1976: 19).

<sup>2</sup>According to later Buddhist textual traditions, each of the aṣṭamaṅgala figures (fish, endless knot, kalash, banner, umbrella, conch, lotus flower, and yak tails) stands for one of the eight Bodhisattvas (Snellgrove and Richardson (1968). None of my informants was aware of this notion..

moon. The two side panels have ceremonial kalash pots (generally auspicious objects--real ones are in place for major events in the household), parrots with jewels in their beaks (symbolizing coming prosperity), and large eyes (representing the guardian deities of the house). (The Hindu doorway differs only in having Śiva/Parvati in the center, flanked by Ganesh, Kumar, Sarasvati, and Vishnu.)

Nāgas: Newar Buddhists view all of the Kathmandu Valley as the domicile of nāgas. This is true right down to the local level, where every area's well has a resident nāga. Tuladhars may have a shrine for worshipping a naga inside somewhere on the ground floor, by a back courtyard drainhole, or on the main wooden beam of the house (nīna).

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## SECOND AND THIRD FLOORS

Khāpā: Khāpā are holes used to erect scaffolding through the outer house walls. Some of these are not filled in so as to allow birds to live in them. Doing this has a religious background: as one Tuladhar man said to me, "This house also belongs to other beings and it is our Dharma to look after their welfare and give them refuge." Some also left the holes empty as a shrine to Hanuman, the Monkey god, or Vayu, the wind god.

Laksmī Shrine: Sometimes kept in a locked grain storage room, more commonly in the eldest male's quarters, this wooden-enclosed shrine for the goddess of good fortune is kept separate from all outsiders. Family gold, silver, and other precious objects are kept

inside the Laksmi shrine box. Only during the Saunti festival is it removed from its secluded location and worshipped daily by the family.

Religious Art in Private Rooms: Every room in the house is designated a protected space by the presence of an amulet nailed above the lintel of the door during the Bau biyegu consecration rites for the new building. This amulet consists of an enclosed, ritually empowered yantra of the Aṣṭa Mātṛkāś, and a peacock feather held in place with an iron nail.

Perhaps the greatest architectural innovation in recent years among the Tuladhars is the division of house space into units on an individual basis. Because of this change from more communal sharing of sleeping and living space, the rooms now reflect the individualistic interests and inclinations of the family members. What is distinctive about Tuladhar households is the everpresent display of Buddhist imagery on the household wall space. From a survey of four Tuladhar houses, the following breakdown of pictures gives a sense of the thoroughly Buddhist environment created by the pictorial media on their walls, as shown in Figure III-10 on the following page.

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#### TOPMOST FLOORS

Hearth: The area where the women of the family normally cook is a wood stove placed in a corner of an upper-storey room adjoining the eating area. It is protected from the polluting presence of lower caste individuals. The hearth area is regularly coated with a mixture of cow dung/clay to maintain its purity.

Pūjā Kothā: The pūjā kothā is the special room of the house that contains the images which are the focus of the daily household devotions. For those without an āgam, it is the place where one does the mantras for the daily Nikhan meditations. There is considerable variation in the deities found in Tuladhar pūjā kothās. One factor affecting the nature of this room is whether or not there is an āgam

Figure III-10 Survey data on Pictorial Imagery in the Household Rooms  
(Four Families)

<u>STRICTLY</u> <u>BUDDHIST</u>	<u>SHARED</u>		<u>STRICTLY</u> <u>HINDU</u>	OTHER
	<u>BUDDHIST</u>	<u>HINDU</u>		
	<----->			
Seated Buddha-62 ~~~				~
				Family Portraits-19
				Nepalese Landscapes-18
Avalokiteśvara-12				Scenes of Western societies-10
Tara-9				
		Laksmi-8		
Svayambhū-6				Hindi Film Stars- 6
Joginīs-5		Ganesh-5		Chinese Revolution-5
Basundhara-4		Bhimsen-4		Western Art-4
Tantric deity/ consort- 3		Saraswati-3	Vishnu-3	Honda-3
Maṇḍalas-3			Linga-2	"Beautiful children"-3
Manjursri-2			Durga-2	"Soft Porn"-2
Maitreya-2				
118 (52%)	20 (9%)	7 (3%)		70 (36%)

in the house. Some households may merge both rooms, keeping the Āgam Dya enclosed in a locked shrine so that the non-initiated may otherwise use the room. Alternatively, some houses with Āgam Dyas may also have elaborate pūjā kothās.

The following survey of all objects of religious art in family pūjā kothās is based on a sample from fifteen households:

Figure III-11 ; Summary of Deities in Tuladhar Pūjā Kothās

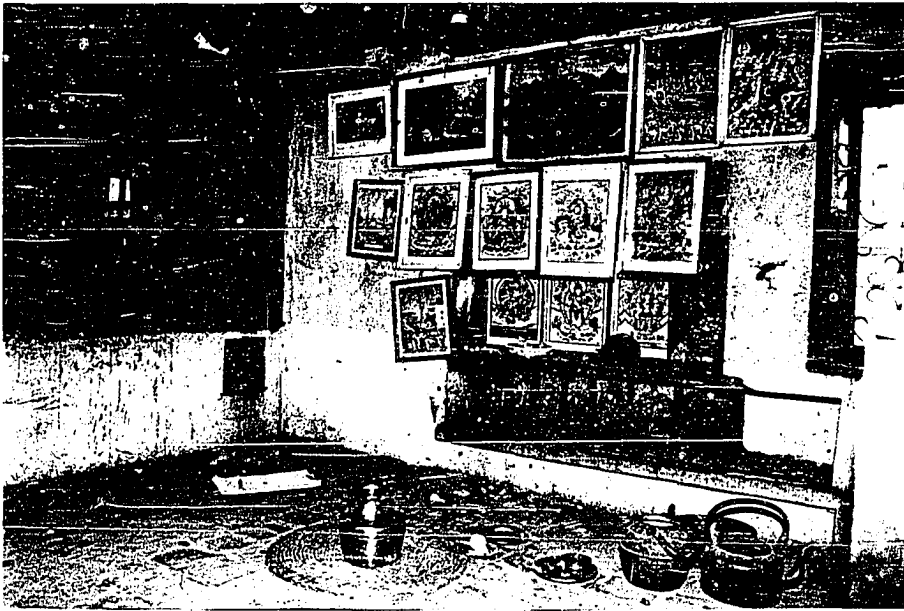
Akshobhya Buddha	20
Padmapani-Avalokiteśvara	16
Theravadin Buddha	16
Joginīs	15
Buddha at Lumbini	12
Ganesh	11
Green Tārā	10
Basundhārā	8
Mañjuśrī	8
Annapurna	7
Bhīmsen	7
Svayambhū	6
Mekha Samvara	4
Chaitya	4
Heruka	3
Chandra Mahāroshana	2
Śiva	1

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The identity of the deities chosen for the most intimate pūjās again show that the Tuladhars are fully Buddhist.

Āgam: This is the room that houses the family's Āgam Dya, a Vajrayāna deity whose image itself is directly accessible only after an individual takes the Dekka initiation. Many deities are Āgam Dyas: Heruka, Vajra Varahi, Samvara, Chandra Maharoshana among them. With the āgam room guarded by the deities Kakasya and Ulkasya, the Āgam Dya is usually kept in a second protective enclosure so that the non-initiated can make offerings without seeing the deity. The restrictions pertaining to this powerful divinity are still carefully

Plate 29: A Tuladhar Pūjā Kothā



adhered to for it is believed that serious injury or death to a family member (and/or the offending outsider) are likely if the rules are broken.

The Āgam Dya is given a share of any puja offering made in the house. Great care is taken to insure that the offerings are proper and that the person making the offerings is ritually pure. For this reason, menstruating women and widows do not make offerings. The Āgam Dya receives offerings of meat and alcohol.

Many family heirlooms--images, paintings, and texts-- are stored in this room.

Rights of access to a given Āgam Dya follow the lines of family lineage. Women retain the rights to their natal shrines. If brothers have divided the household, only one brother will have the Āgam Dya in



Plate 30: Hearth

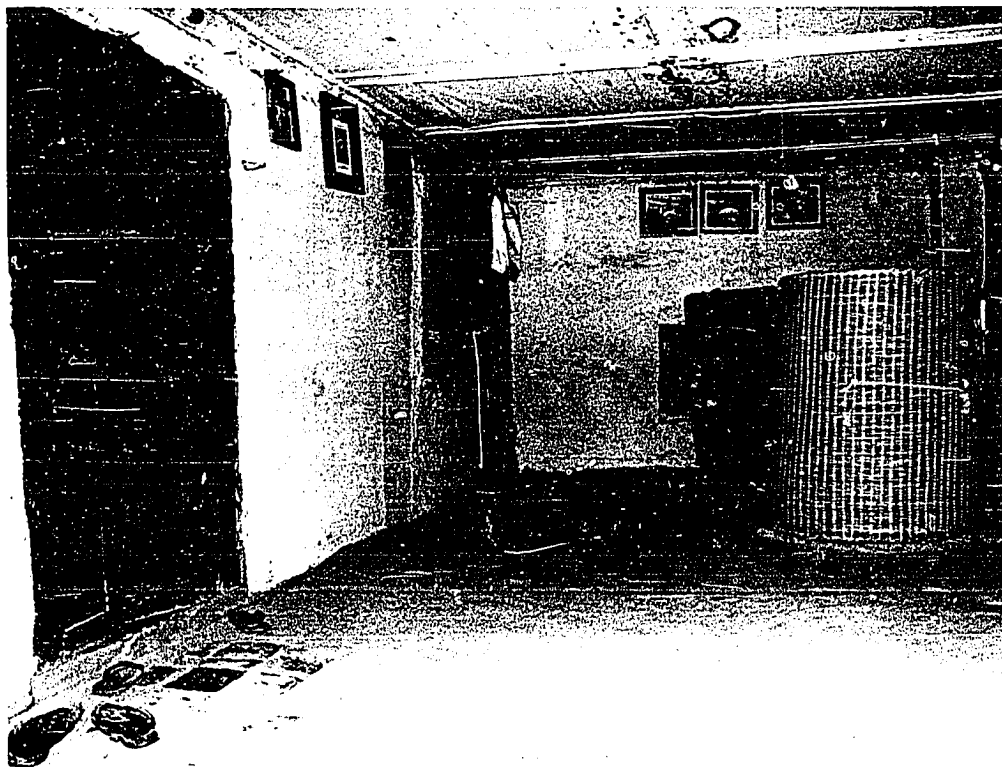


Plate 31: Agam Door (left) and Granary (back right)

the house unless new images were made and other ritual implements/ornaments were divided. We found that about 25% of the Tuladhar households had Āgam Dyas in them. Even if a household's splitting was bitter and the families are not on speaking terms, social custom still guarantees access to the Āgam Dya shrine for those who have moved elsewhere.

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#### ROOFTOP

Sūrdya: An image to the sungod, sūrdya, is kept on most rooftops. Tuladhars make offerings to the sun in the morning and to the moon after sunset. A typical image of sūrdya has a face surrounded by twelve lamps. (Twelve is the number of the solar mansions.)

Prayer flags: Many Tuladhars, especially those with a history of Tibetan trade, fly prayer flags from their rooftops. Flags with Tibetan letters are most common. Though informants averred that Newari language flags were also available, I could never locate any.

Svayambhū: An Asan rooftop is ideal if it enables one to have a darshan of Svayambhū on the hilltop to the west of the city.

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#### Sacred Space in Newar Culture

The Newar house should be seen as an aesthetic refuge from the busy, loud, and often malodorous marketplace that dominates life in Asan Tol. In the realm of religion, the house is also a refuge that



provides an environment for meditation, a sanctified setting for the cults that guarantee health and prosperity, and a zone of protection against malevolent supernatural agents.

In their houses, Tuladhars set up a clear series of religious boundaries that invite comparison with a maṇḍala. This geometrically arranged form that originated in ancient India and is made explicit in the house construction rituals sets up directional coordinates for reality which are used to create an image of divine cosmological order. Maṇḍalas almost always suggest a house at the center of reality, though its representation is reduced to two dimensions (Wayman 1973: 82ff). In the outer shell are the protectors; in the center is the Āgam Dya. In between, in the pūjā kothā and private rooms is a vast pantheon of divinities that testifies clearly to the Buddhist character of the Tuladhar house while also reflecting the recent inclusion of modern pictorial media. The Hindu gods of material prosperity, Bhimsen, Saraswatī, and Laksmī are the only exceptions to a predominantly Mahāyāna pantheon. Just as the Vajrayāna adds on a further, initiation-guarded, dimension to Mahāyāna tradition, so the āgam is a carefully secluded addition to the household's religious orientation.

The cultural media in a Tuladhar house-- as seen on the walls and pūjā rooms-- constitutes an important circle of the Buddhist religious geography. Unlike the pluralistic environment in the streets and as propagated in the rituals of the Hindu state, this inner realm is unambiguously Buddhist in arrangement and in the media that shape the Tuladhars' daily experience.

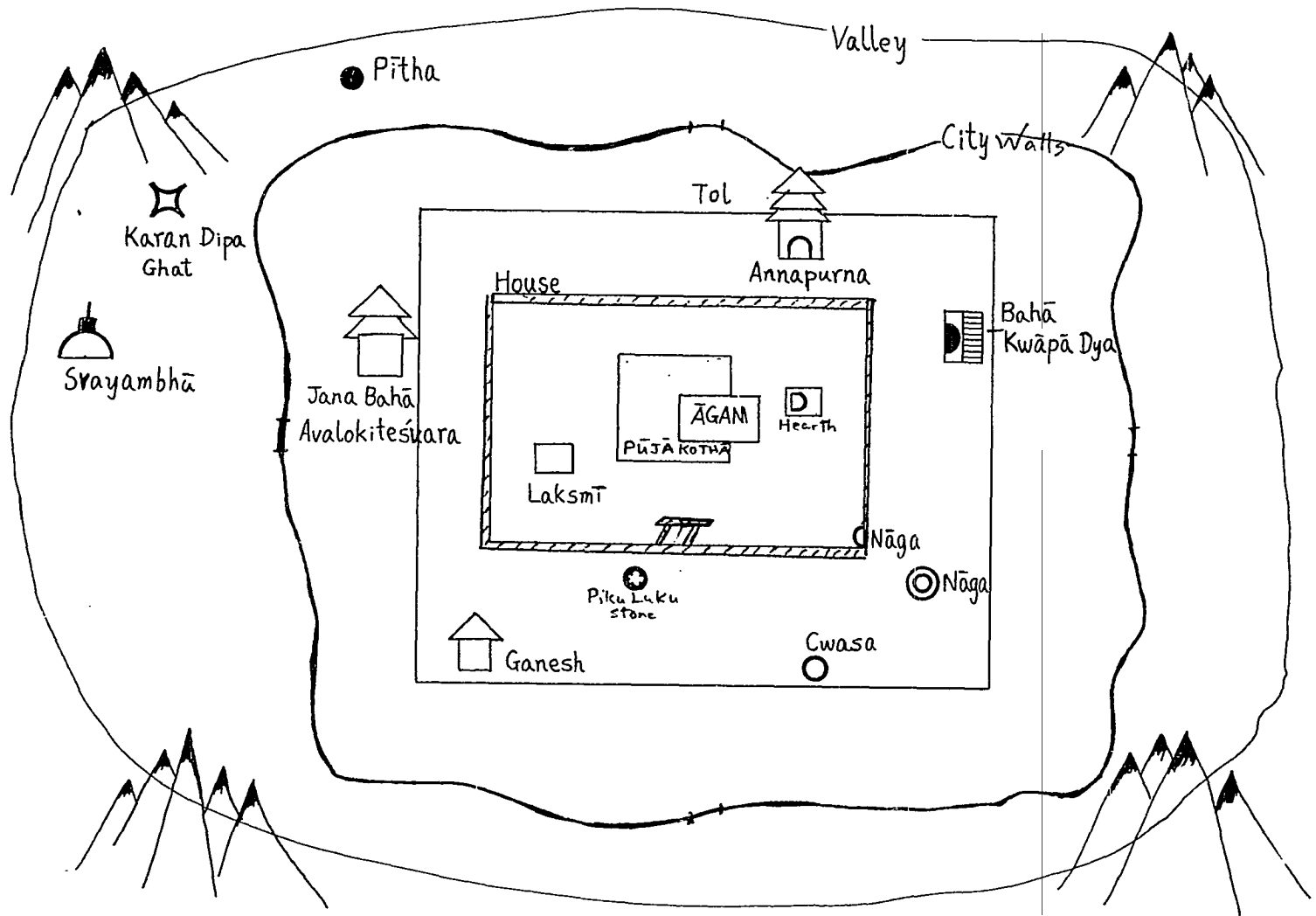
The maṇḍala paradigm for reality has been incorporated into every dimension of Newar Buddhist life as a traditional structure of spatial order. The maṇḍala is not only an explicit, consciously recognized model, but it is also embedded in Newar lifestyle as a shared paradigm implicit in art, architecture, temple space, and town layout. It is most conscious for those who are closest to the classical religious texts, where maṇḍalas are consciously entered into via meditation and through pūjās.

When we trace the concentric circles<sup>1</sup> of the religious geography, we see that there are a multitude of shrines that circle the Valley, town, tol, and individual, right down to the inner household environment. This can be summarized as in Map III-10. Thus, we can point to structural homologies between the pattern of organized shrines, religious art, the household center, and finally, into the human body through the physiology of kundalinī meditation. In each case, reality is divided into circular space ordered by hierarchy, with the center as the focal point. These levels intersect to form a series of powerful cultural continuities that shape the flow of daily life, mold individual experience, and knit Newar society together.

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<sup>1</sup>Clark's discussion of the 51 tīrthas mentioned in the Malla Rani Pokhari inscription shows that this model of concentric circles was consciously used (1957: 173).

Map III-10: Summary of Concentric Patterns in the Religious Geography



We can conclude that a person doing his kuṇḍalinī meditation in the family āgam is in the position where all of the symbolic orders merge. As a Newar text on the house says, "The āgam is mokṣa for those who practice religion (Slusser 1982: 421)." The architectural order then creates the space where other levels of reality--and tradition--find their principle intellectual meaning and soteriological focus.

The arrangement of local shrines provides a religious backdrop to nearly every activity in Asan. Religious media-- in architecture forms, as temple adornment, on shrines, and in the households -- draws human experience into the cosmos articulated by religious tradition. As we will see in other areas, Newar Buddhists make a polemical reading of cults shared with Hindus and that only at the great stupas, bahās, and in the Urāy home is there an exclusively Buddhist cultural environment.

This rather extended survey of the religious geography that Tuladhars in Asan live in shows the extent to which this neighborhood is a richly elaborated religious environment. This truly massive realm of religious possibility has led to considerable variation among laymen on what cultic involvement is entered into to define a Buddhist lifestyle. The situation in Asan is a far cry from a Newar village, with one major temple and a few minor shrines. For the residents there is a greater choice in local cults and a diminished sense of sharing one religious map with others in their midst.

For all of its complexity, the traditional religious geography imparts a sense of center and centeredness on many levels of lay

experience.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the structure and content of cultural media is fundamental to the ongoing construction of the Newar Buddhist tradition. Changes in this domain likewise reveal the influences at work changing the ancient maṇḍala paradigm that once organized everything from inner spiritual imagery to the architectural topography.

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<sup>1</sup>One common remark by Tuladhar informants was that they felt uncomfortable when they stayed outside of Asan for too long.

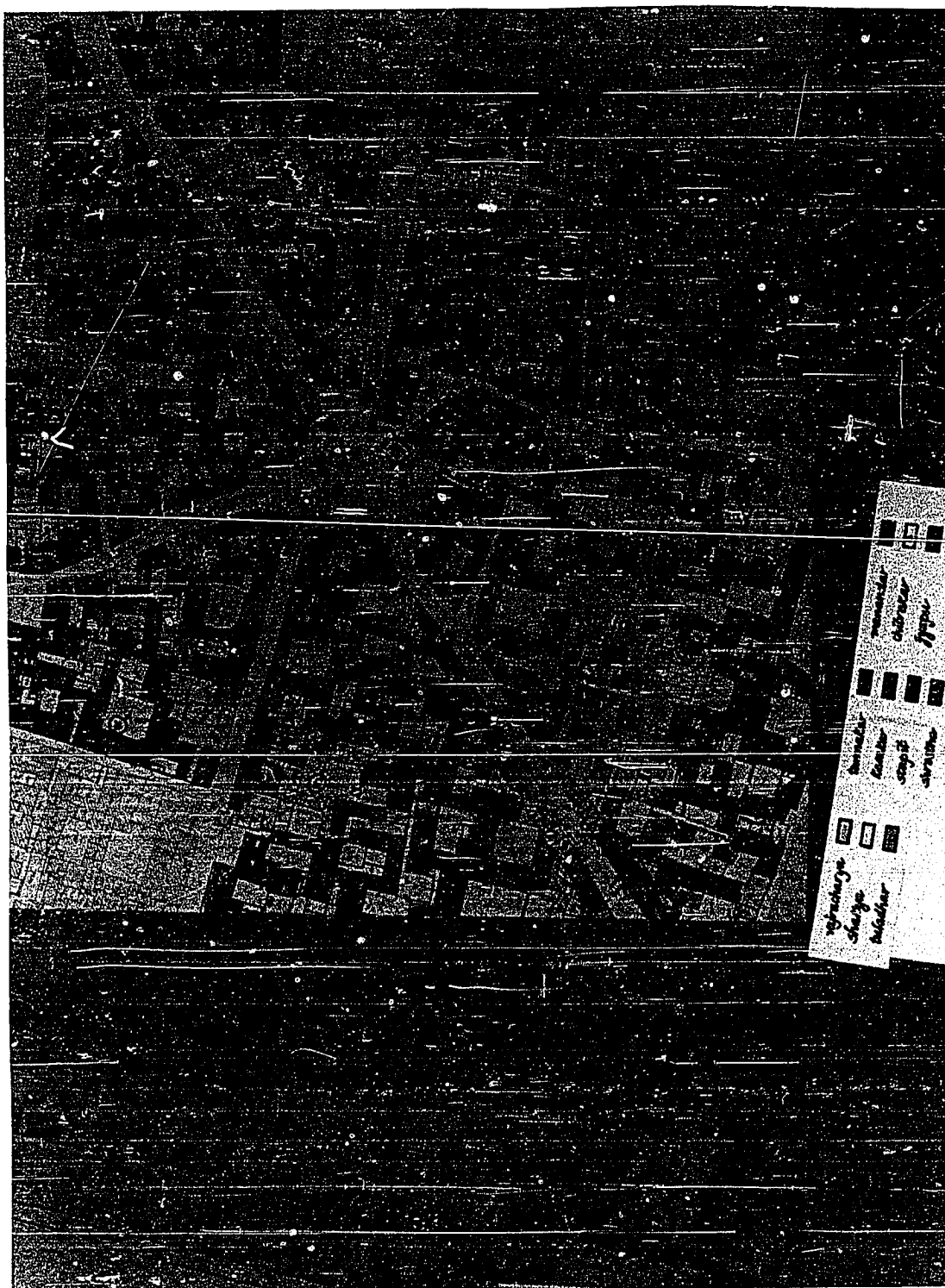
CHAPTER IV  
Asan Tol as a Social Setting and the  
Social Organization of the Asan Tuladhar Community

This chapter outlines the social context in and around Asan Tol, starting with the ethnic diversity of Nepal's capital, moving to the spectrum of groups within Asan, and then describing the social organization of the Tuladhar community.

ASAN: A Demographic Portrait

In this section, we will report on our demographic survey of shops, residences, and streetsellers in the study area. This data is represented in Maps IV-1 and IV-2. Information regarding house ownership was obtained by means of a house-to-house survey done by my Newar assistant and myself over a three month period in the spring of 1981. Using land registry maps, we ascertained the caste identity of each map-designated resident unit. As indicated in Map IV-1, we identified 967 legally designated units. The central problem in this methodology is that every legally designated entity does not necessarily signify a separate household. For example, some families have legally divided a house but are not living separately; the minute divisions seen in the map make this clear. To derive a rough estimate of the skewing this method entailed, we did a small in-depth study of one area around Dagu Bahā and discovered that using the legal boundaries involved an "overestimation factor" of approximately .34 (34%). We also used our cross-Asan sample of households to determine that the average household size was 6.9 people. Using these rough

Map IV-I: Residents of Asan Tol



figures, the size of the study area population was determined to be approximately 2,000 people.<sup>1</sup>

The results of the household residence survey can be summarized according to ethnic group identity:

Figure IV-1: The Ethnic Identity of Asan Residents

Newars tracing ancestry to Kathmandu	95 %
Newars tracing ancestry to Bhaktapur	1.2 %
Hill Nepalis	3.0 %
Ethnic Tibetans, Buddhist	0.6 %
Ethnic Tibetans, Muslim	0.2 %
	<u>100 %</u>

Shopkeeper Survey

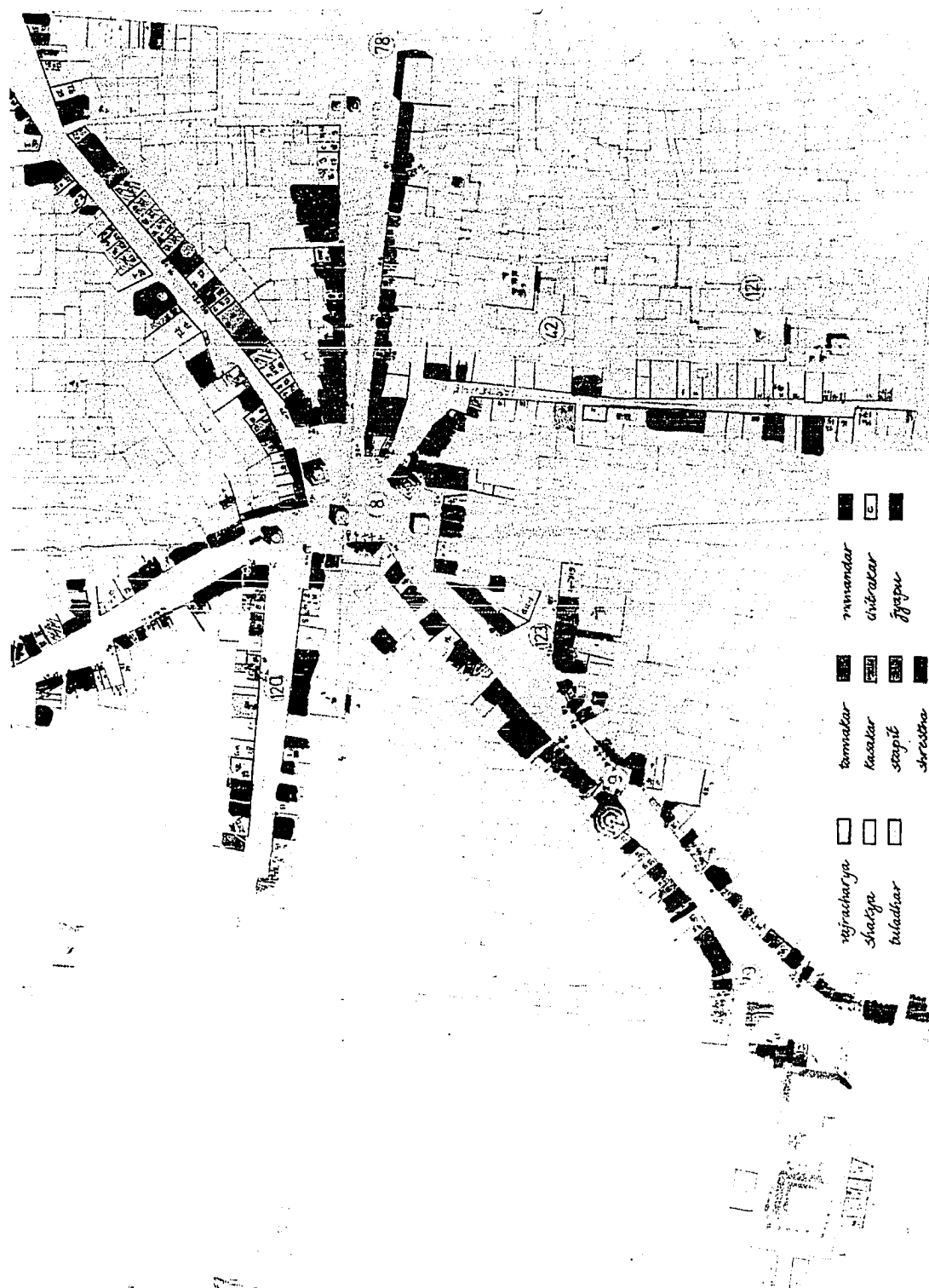
In most cases, shops are located on the ground floor of houses that line the major roads of Asan. In the past, it was common practice for the family living above to have its business located below. This pattern has changed somewhat in recent years. Asan families have increasingly divided this space to rent it to others for several reasons: rising land and rental values, the increased profitability of the market, moving the family business elsewhere, and leaving market trade for other pursuits. According to Nepalese law, shop space in the ground floor of the house can be separated from the house and sold off, but this is still a relatively rare occurrence. We found still fewer instances of settled Asan Newars selling off house space to

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<sup>1</sup> An in-depth census of Asan would render more exact results; funds and time were lacking for undertaking such a time-consuming and problematic task.



Map IV-2: Caste Identity of Shopkeepers in Asan



non-Newars. The practice of subdividing and renting out all available shop space has grown in recent years so that almost every ground floor area in Asan is now someone's shop.

To determine the demographic character of the merchant community in the study area, we completed a more in-depth survey of the shopkeepers with shops along every lane in Asan. The results of this survey, done in 1980, are summarized in Figure IV-2:

Figure IV-2: The Ethnic Identity of Asan Shopkeepers

Newars tracing ancestry to Kathmandu	85	%
Tibetans (Buddhists-4.3% Muslims- 2.7%)	7	%
Hill Nepalis	3.5	%
Indians	2.5	%
Newars tracing ancestry to Bhaktapur	2.0	%
	100	%

From these two surveys, we can see that outsiders have gained a business foothold in Asan more readily than a residential one. This should not be surprising given that population increases in town have left Newar families with insufficient space for themselves so that there would be little chance for outsiders to buy in. The success of the Tibetans can be explained in part by the fact that as refugees they have little else but trade to support themselves; their success in Asan is also related to their contacts with former Tibetan traders among the Newars.

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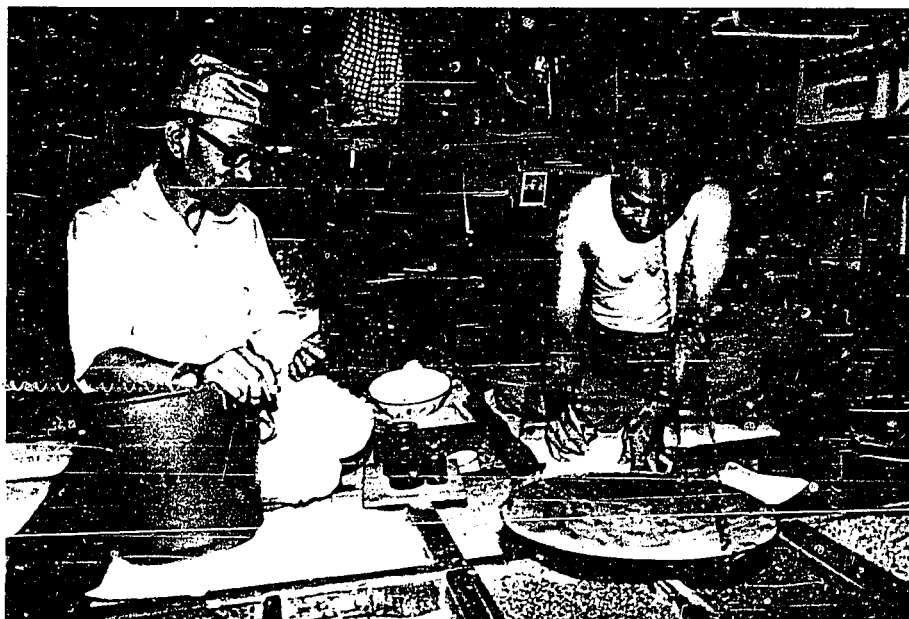


Plate 32 and Plate 33: Scenes from Tuladhar Shops



### Streetsellers

The streetsellers add to the ethnic diversity in Asan tol. Most streetsellers do not reside in Asan, but they spend the daylight and early evening hours on the public thoroughfares, mainly in the central market crossroads. The movement of people and merchandise through the marketplace provides a continuing spectacle. Although there is some seasonal and day-long variation, survey data from a regular fall weekday gives some indication of the ethnic character found in the market streets.

Figure IV-3: The Ethnic Identity of People Selling on the Central Asan Streets, October 28, 1980

Newars	46.5 %		
Kathmandu Jyāpus	10.0 %		
Thimi Jyāpus	17.0 %	=	46.5 %
Kathmandu Nhays	19.5 %		
Hill Nepalis	30.8 %		
Tamang Porters	18.0 %	=	53.5 %
Indians	4.7 %		
	(n=92)		<hr/> 100 %

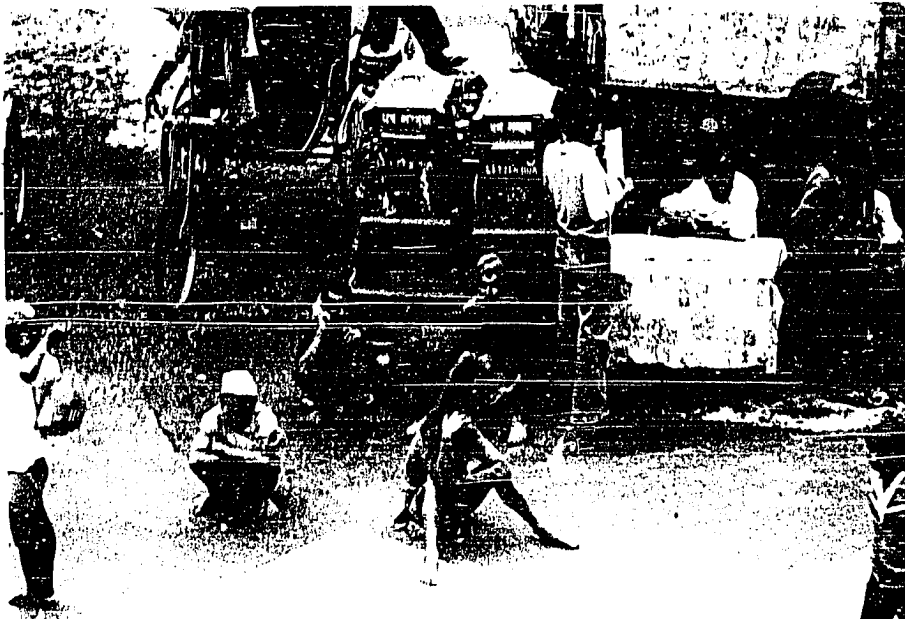
On this same day, there were 25 Indian sādhus, 9 Theravada bhikṣus, and 7 lamas who passed through the market. We also counted 157 tourists.

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From these indicators, we can note that as a residential neighborhood Asan has remained very dominantly Newar. The outsiders who come in to sell and buy add to the complexity of the social order here by acquiring shop space and through their using the public streets as a theatre for transactions in goods and labor. Others such



Plate 34: Street Sellers and Bearers in the Asan Market



+ Plate 35: Laborers Waiting for Work in Central Asan

as the destitute, begging Hindu holy men, and an occasional pickpocket also come into Asan to live off the money changing hands here. Economic exchange is the medium for these interactions with outsiders.

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INTERCASTE RELATIONS IN ASAN TOL:  
The Newar Caste System from the Tuladhar Perspective

Asan Tol is dominated by two merchant castes, the Tuladhars and the Shresthas. In the neighborhood, however, a full spectrum of high and low caste groups is present. The following table arranges these groups in the order reported by Allen (1973) in his survey of Kathmandu City. Most of my informants in Asan agree to the status ranking we have followed here, with the proviso that they are superior to the Shresthas:

Figure IV-4: Caste Breakdown of Asan Residents

<u>Buddhist Castes</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Hindu Castes</u>	<u>%</u>
Vajrācārya (62)	6.4	Upadhyay Brahmin(1)	.1
Sākya/Bare (39)	4.0	Karmācārya (10)	1.0
Urāy		Shreṣṭhas	
Tulādhar (342)	35.4	"Shrestha"(227)	23.5
Kansākar (52)	1.4	Rajbandhāri (24)	2.5
Tamrākar (16)	1.7	Pradhān (13)	<u>1.3</u>
Sthāpit (5)	<u>0.7</u>		
	39.2*		27.3*
	Jyāpu (56)	1.8 %	
Chitrakār (7)	0.7		
Manandhar (16)	1.7		
Kau (4)	0.4	Māli (7)	0.7
Nay (7)	0.7	Jogi (7)	0.7
		Dhobya (1)	0.1
<u>Groups recently settled in Asan:</u>			
Tibetan Buddhists	0.6	Kayastha (10)	1.0
		Joshi (13)	1.3
		Misc. Newars	1.2
	Non-Newar Hindus (31)		3.5

A summary of the religious breakdown of Asan residents can be drawn using this data. To make the table below, we have removed the Jyāpus from the total number of households for the reason that it is questionable to characterize their religious tradition as either "Hindu" or "Buddhist" using the criterion of family purohit used for the other groups listed above. (Most Jyāpus I questioned employed both.)<sup>1</sup> Comparing the caste breakdown in Asan with Allen's (ibid.) for all Kathmandu reveals the decidedly Buddhist character of this market as an area of residence.

Figure IV-5: Summary of the Religious Identity of Asan Residents

	Buddhists	Hindus	Muslims	
Households:	551	357	3	n=911
Percent:	60.5	39.2	0.3	100%

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Social life in Asan is ordered by the principles of caste endogamy and commensuality. The concern with pollution and purity is similar to that found throughout the Indian subcontinent (Harper 1963). Cooked rice, drinking water, and the hookah can be accepted only from caste equals or superiors. The family home is similarly

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<sup>1</sup>As Jyāpus constitute over 50 % of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, how one characterizes the dominant religion of the Newars hangs very much on resolving this issue.

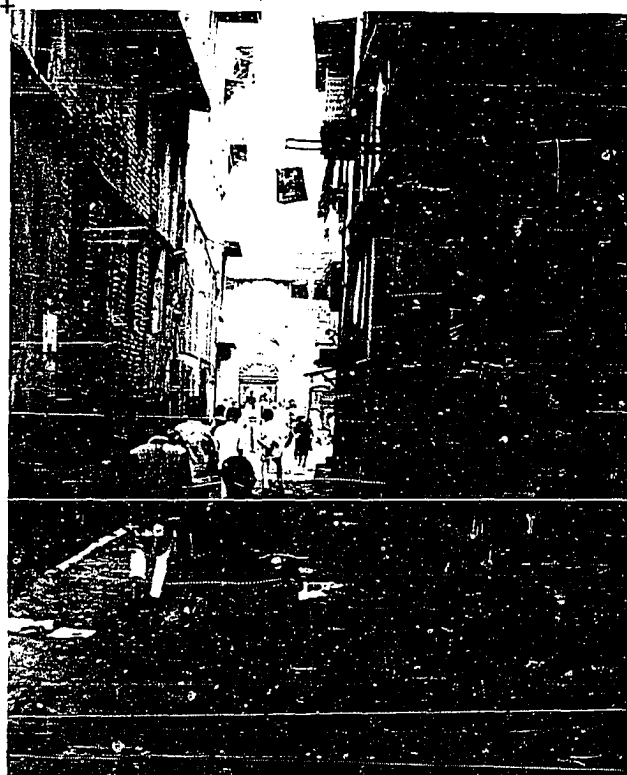


Plate 36: A Narrow Back Lane in Asan

Plate 37: A Major Market Street





protected from outside pollution, with the kitchen hearth as the ritual center. Caste inferiors are not to be allowed near this area.

The Tuladhars have an extensive network of relationships with other caste groups. Although these bonds have weakened in recent years, they are still deeply embedded in Newar social life and in the way Tuladhars view themselves. From the topmost groups to the lowest, we will trace the nature of intercaste relations for the Tuladhars.

### Brahmans

Most Tuladhars think that Brahmans are the topmost group in their caste system. Although they utilize Vajrācāryas for their regular household rituals and recognize them as their gurus, Tuladhars are linked religiously to Brahmans in several domains. Many have taken part in the popular Hindu brata called "Satya Narayana" and most go to the story telling sessions put on intermittently by different Newar Brahmans<sup>1</sup>. They may also take part in the Ihi puja life cycle rite conducted by Brahman ritualists. Finally, for the Buda Janko life cycle rite, Tuladhars call a Brahman to come receive godān ("the gift of a cow"), an offering given to assure a good after-death destiny.

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter V for the discussion of this and other bratas. All subjects mentioned here are discussed in later chapters.

### Vajrācāryas

According to the rules of the town-wide Vajrācārya guthi<sup>1</sup>, a laymen may call only his designated family Vajracarya priest for the regular round of yearly pujas and individual life cycle rituals. Moreover, only this priest, who is most commonly called "guruju" by Buddhist laymen, may worship the family Āgam Dya, an essential component of any major household ritual.

As a result of the great Uray-Vajracarya thirty year dispute (1923-1953)<sup>2</sup>, the previous pattern of foods jajmān tenure that evenly allotted Vajrācārya families with Urāy households ended (Rosser 1966). Uray bitterness was such that they chose en masse to discard the old network of ties in favor of the few Vajracarya families who supported them. Although the fight was settled in 1953, the old jajmān-guruju pattern was not restored. Descendants from Vajrācārya families of Ta Che Bahā (Asan) and Kwa Bahā (in the north of town), who sided with the Urāy, still perform most of the ritual service for the Asan Tuladhars. Some of the other Vajrācāryas still have their lower caste jajmāns, but most lost the richest laymen as patrons.

On many grounds it is plausible to analyze the Vajrācārya's role as that of a "Buddhist Brahman". The Vajrācāryas are at the head of a Buddhist caste hierarchy. As followers of most points of classical Indian caste ideology, as guardians and repositories of their tradition, and as the essential mediators in the complex forms of ritual communication with the divinities, the Vajrācāryas find

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<sup>1</sup>The guthi, a voluntary association, is discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter XI for a discussion of this very important event.

themselves at the top of a social order that is self-consciously Buddhist, but which socially turns on Brahmanic principles.

The label "Buddhist Brahman" is not fully apt, however. After noting the sociological fact of their role in a caste-defined society, we must also consider the Vajrācāryas as Buddhist hierophants. Vajrayāna Buddhism is an exclusivistic and elitist religion in any society. It assumes many levels of individual spirituality and spiritual status, with access to initiations a clear marker of this fact. In the Newar context, it is also significant that Vajrayana doctrines assert a very different intellectual and ritual framework as compared to the Hindu traditions of the Newar Brahmins. The mutual acceptance of caste ideology and behavior is also not completely the same: One key contrast between the Vajrācāryas and the Newar Brahmins is that most Vajrācāryas will now eat the cooked rice offered by their high caste jajmāns, something a Newar Brahman would never do. Moreover, the Vajrācārya is not a vegetarian in practice or ideally. In fact, the most apt comparison between the Vajracaryas and Hindu ritualists is with the Karmācāryas, tantric Hindu hierophants who perform rituals for jajmāns (Toffin 1981: 73).

For most Urāy, contact with the Vajrācāryas is in the person of their family's traditional guruju. Only through special programs of public story recitation, or more rarely, by a layman reading modern texts published by Vajrācārya pandits, does this circle of contact expand. In my sample, few Tuladhars could name any Vajrācārya besides their guruju and perhaps one famous story teller. This was especially true among the women.

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### Sakyas

The caste of Sakyas (until recently called "Sakya-bhiksu") also claim to have monastic roots in their ancestry and most are members of the kacca bahas in Kathmandu. They take all of the same life cycle rites and initiations that the Vajracaryas do except for the pancabhiseka ("Five Initiations"), which enables the latter to perform rituals for laymen (Locke 1980: 47). Many Sakyas are now goldsmiths and silverworkers and the Tuladhars interact with them in this capacity. Sakyas have one ceremonial role to play for the Tuladhars: they may be invited to accompany the groom's party when fetching the new bride. At this time he is treated with special respect as a guest in the bride's home and as part of her farewell ceremonies, fastens a bracelet around the girl's wrist before she departs. It is in this respected but minor role that Sakyas have a special relationship with the Tuladhars.

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### Joshi (or Jyotis)

The family astrologer plays an important role in the family's ritual life. Next to the Vajracarya, he is the second most important cultural specialist in the Newar Buddhist context. Specialists of the Joshi caste draw up an individual's horoscope and is its sole interpreter. He determines the date for any birthday and the exact auspicious moment (seit) for commencing the key moment in most life-cycle rites. The Joshi is also consulted on the suitability of marriage partners, land and building purchases, and for assistance in solving rather mundane problems such as illness, lost articles, problem children, or legal disputes.

Plate 38: A Jyāpu Carrying Vegetables in a Kamu Basket



Plate 39: An Astrologer  
at his Calculating Table



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Tuladhar relations with the astrologers are ad hoc and unregulated; one pays in rice and coin at any consultation. Though theoretically open to change, families in Asan rarely stray from their past associations. The family women in my sample handled over 85% of the Tuladhar conferrals with their Joshi and held significantly greater belief in this system compared to the men. We also noted no significant difference between the way that Hindu Newars and Buddhist Newars relate to the astrological tradition: both go to the same Joshis and have the same horoscope drawn up.<sup>1</sup>

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### Shrestha

Shresthas and Tuladhars are roughly equal in number as residents and shopkeepers in Asan and both have intricately woven social lives within their own caste communities. As generally prosperous shopkeepers, the Shresthas are the economic counterparts to the Tuladhars, but differ in their adherence to Hindu cultural practices: calling a Brahman priest for rituals, worshipping at Hindu shrines (but not Buddhist stupas), and following the Hindu festival cycle.

Although observers outside the Urāy and Shrestha castes would rank these groups on an equal footing, both claim the other to be inferior.<sup>2</sup> Outside of (relatively infrequent) friendships, Tuladhars

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<sup>1</sup>The Joshi is not the only astrological specialist, however. Several Vajrācārya priests and one Tuladhar layman in Asan were also casting horoscopes in 1982.

<sup>2</sup>The Shresthas challenge the pureness of Urāy lineage and tell a number of stories at their expense which end with the Urāy trying to explain his caste history with the rhyming exclamation: "Chu Dhay, Chu Dhay? ...Urāy ." ("What to say, what to say...Urāy.")

have little social contact with Shresthas (whom Urāy refer to derogatorily as "Shesha:"). For the most part, they are neighbors and competitors in the market. Tuladhars-Shrestha rivalry goes beyond economics and status: it reaches deep into primordial sentiments about Newar culture. Tuladhars feel that the Shresthas have been opportunistic in adapting to Shah rule<sup>1</sup> and look down upon their adopting the latter's customs while abandonning "true" Newar culture.<sup>2</sup> Tuladhars point out many differences between the two groups in terms of language, household ritual, and religious goals.

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### Jyāpus

The Tuladhars have especially complicated and interwoven relations with this farmer caste who form the majority of Newars in the Valley. Entrepreneuring Jyāpu farmers used to establish regular seller-buyer relationships for their vegetables, a practice that has given way to more impersonal street selling.

Most Urāy also have ties to Jyāpu tennants. These connections have their roots in the feudal relationships that were maintained between landlords and cultivators dating from Malla times. Under a form of tenancy called rakam, the latter were required to perform many kinds of service for the landowner in addition to farming his land (Regmi 1976: 156; Webster 1983: 143). In return, the Jyāpu kept one half of the harvest and participated in many sorts of material

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<sup>1</sup>The Shresthas, unlike the Tuladhars, have succeeded in great numbers at gaining governmental positions.

<sup>2</sup>These differences almost certainly extend back to the Malla era.

exchange with their Urāy landlords. The legal basis for this service, of course, is no longer extant; but the expectation of service, which is woven intricately into Uray customs, still exists. In modern times, monetary payments and feast shares must be offered to secure the Jyāpus' services.

Both male and female Jyāpus are called upon to deliver messages (recalling brides from their natal homes, or daughters to their natal homes, or relatives at the time of a death in the family) to assist at the time of special feasts, and to deliver offerings to distant shrines. As these relationships are often long-standing and cross-generational, they are frequently warm and friendly as those bonds that have survived have done so because of mutual regard and friendship.

Considering the Asan community as a whole, it is clear that the interdependency of Urāy landlords and Jyāpu tenants has been breaking down rapidly. The Jyāpus in large numbers have succeeded in weakening landlord dominance<sup>1</sup> by either claiming as their own the lands they once farmed as Urāy tenants or by refusing to turn over the proper grain payment. Some of the most common complaints in the Tuladhar community reflect these changes: "their" Jyāpus give reduced and substandard grain; they refuse to come when called to help, or if they do come, they come intoxicated; the Jyāpus are now "uppity". The success of the Jyāpus on land tenure is due to the unwillingness

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<sup>1</sup>The Jyāpus have also pursued agricultural innovations (rice varieties, chemical fertilizers) which have increased their yields dramatically-- but the Urāy have not benefitted because the landlord's share was fixed according to 1963 Land Reform standards (Webster 1983: 144).



and/or inability of the Urāy to undertake the legal efforts necessary to enforce their prerogatives. Unlike the Shresthas, who have entered into the government bureaucracy in great numbers and who can "get things done", the Urāy have not done so and feel extremely reluctant to try, a cultural trait that I had reported to me time and time again in these matters. In successfully claiming farmlands near the city, the Jyāpus have gained some of the most valuable real estate in the Kathmandu Valley. Many have become quite wealthy so that quite naturally they refuse to come when called to do the menial tasks Urāys once depended upon them to do.<sup>1</sup>

The Urāy guṭhis have suffered from drastic cuts in their land endowment incomes; Urāy families have had to change their household religious life, cutting down the scale of their observances. In Asan, over 20% of the families have hired non-Newars as household servants to compensate, in part, for this breakdown. The growing economic independence among Jyāpus proximate to Kathmandu town has clearly been at the expense of Urāy culture, a trend that the Tuladhars deplore but have been unable to resist.

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### Diri Aji

The Diri Aji, who is usually referred to simply as "Aji", is the traditional midwife who usually comes from the Jyāpu caste. Before

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<sup>1</sup>Many of the Jyāpus who live around Kathmandu city have effectively changed their status such that they are now profoundly different from Jyāpus living elsewhere in the Kathmandu Valley. It is this upwardly mobile class that has changed its caste name to "Shrestha", as Rosser (1966) has shown.

modern hospitals were available in Kathmandu, the Dirī Aji would assist in the delivery of babies and in the post-natal care of the mother. Now that all Urāy babies are born in hospitals, the Aji's role has contracted to the rituals of birth pollution and to Janko, the first rice feeding. Many families still employ an Aji to give the new mother and child their daily massage with mustard oil in the months after the birth.

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### Gons

This low Jyāpu subcaste specializes in carrying out cremations for upper caste groups at the burning grounds. Urāy families who are not members of a Śī guthi or who have a Sanā guthi affiliation employ them to carry out this task in return for which they receive cash payment.<sup>1</sup>

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### Chitrakār

According to G.S. Nepali, the Chitrakar caste is descended from a union between an Urāy woman and a low caste man (1965: 170). Though ranked lower than the Jyāpus in terms of =classical pollution-purity criteria, the true artists among the Chitrakar are highly respected because they must paint the secret Vajrayāna gods. Before doing so, they must receive an initiation which is normally open to Urāy and

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<sup>1</sup>See the discussion on cremation guthis below. Some Urāy have long-standing ties with Gons whom they depend upon if there is a any death in the family.

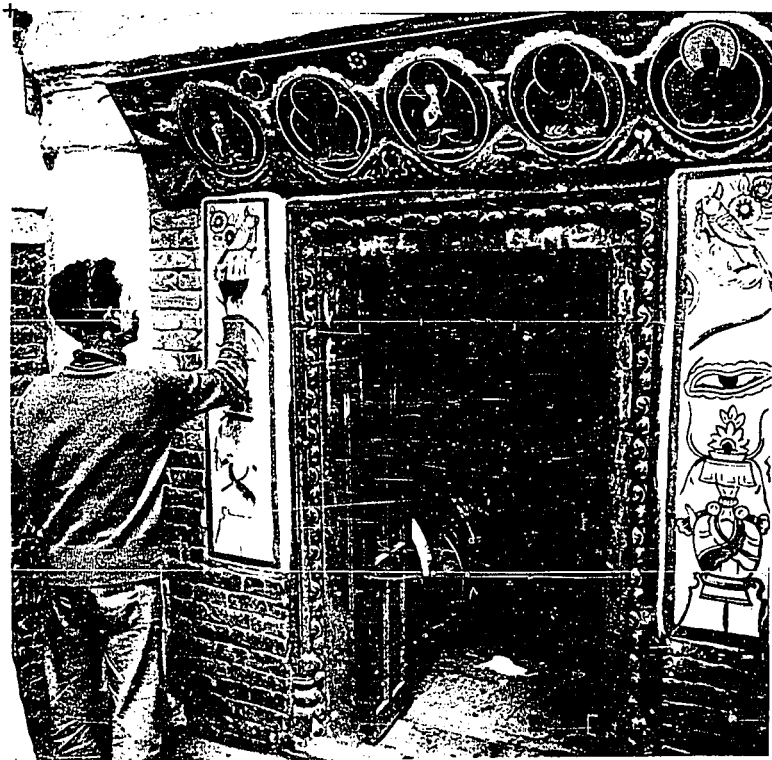


Plate 40:  
Chitrakar Painter

Plate 41:  
Gop Cremation  
Specialist  
(at right)



Vajrācāryas only.

The inter-relations between Urāy and the painter caste Chitrakars have also declined greatly in recent times. Formerly the pun, as the Chitrakars are nicknamed, used to whitewash house walls on a regular basis, paint ritual objects for many of the life cycle rituals, and repaint the Laksmī shrine in preparation for Saunti. Urāy patrons would also commission them to paint hanging religious paintings (paṭa). All of these services have declined as mass-produced and cheaper printed images have become readily available in the market and as the Chitrakars have simultaneously moved into the lucrative field of commercial art and the tourist trade. With rare exceptions, the Chitrakar are now called only at the time of a wedding, when they repaint the ceremonial Pañca-Buddha entranceway to the house.

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### Nau

The family barber (male or female) still finds a wide-scale business in many Tuladhar households, making regular rounds about every two weeks to cut nails with the sharp cutting blade, the calancā. The Nau's role as the mens' regular hair cutter, however, has largely declined because of the spread of Indian-style barber shops in Kathmandu that cater to style-conscious Newar men.

However, the Nau's hair cutting service is still required for the monthly head-shaving that is obligatory for the chief mourner during the first year of mourning. Likewise, at the times when family purification is necessary (saṃskāras, major feasts, etc.), the Nauni (i.e. female of this caste) still comes to cut the family members'

nails. (For those who prefer not to accept this service, the simple touch of the calancā is still ritually bestowed.)

Many Naus have tried to advance socially by abandoning their caste's traditional tasks. As seen in the streetseller survey, fruit and vegetable selling is one such new occupation that they have entered. Because some Naus concentrate only on this, it is common to find that an Urāy family has abandoned an older tie to gain the service of a barber family still active in the traditional occupation.

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### Kasai

These low caste butchers were until recent times prohibited from selling meat from shops in the downtown area. Instead, the Kasai had to confine themselves to the town's periphery while maintaining regular selling relationships with downtown Urāy families. In the last five years, shops have been permitted in the center of Asan so that this older tie has been obviated. Some families still deal with one seller who makes deliveries and who, say the Urāy, provides consistently superior cuts of meat.

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### Dhobyas

Uray relations with this washerman caste still endure but in a much curtailed form. When the older style daurā-suruwal ("pant-coat") men's outfit was the common dress, the Dhobya's washing, ironing, and creasing services were essential. In the last decade the choice of western "ready-made" clothing became the near-ubiquitous fashion. For

+ Plate 42: A Nauni Using Her Nail-Cutting Blade (calancā) +



Plate 43:  
A Chamkala  
Sweeper



this reason, the Tuladhars have turned away from the Dhobyas as their ways are thought to be too rough for these garments. As a result, the women of the house are now entrusted with most of the household laundry.

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### Jogi

This interesting group of Newar musicians claim to be settled Gorakhnathi sanyāsins. They were especially honored by the Malla kings who gave them special rights to control major public resthouses and to receive certain offerings (Slusser 1974: 210). Among themselves, Jogi families have territorial rights to determine who receives a portion of every family feast in Asan and for specified offerings of articles and foods prepared by a mourning family for departed ancestors. On such occasions, the Jogis come to receive their due from the hands of the Uray women. Their coming often reminds the family that a share of the feast should be set aside for their dead kinsmen.

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### Damai

Although the Damai are traditionally leather workers and tailors, they have broadened their professional activities in recent times. For their services as musicians, Urāy hire Damai to accompany their wedding and cremation processions and to play in accompaniment with the Guṇlā Bājan.

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### Chamkala

The Chamkala are untouchable Newar sweepers. For most Tuladhars, the sewerage system that was built in Asan in the early 1960's ended the necessity of their having to employ sweepers to clean out their toilets. Previous to this, Chamkalas used to collect and then sell the nightsoil to Jyāpus for their fields as part of the traditional ecological system.

Chamkalas now clean the public streets in return for payment by the city government. But individual families living on the same courtyard still band together and pay to have Chamkalas clean this space. When they come to work, Urāy parents still instruct their children not to get too close to the sweepers and never allow any physical contact with them.

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### Conclusion:

#### THE TULADHARS AND CASTE

As we have described, Newar society in Asan is organized according to caste principles that are expressed in the observance of rules governing pollution and purity. Just as the city space is laid out according to caste ranking, so personal relationships are ordered along caste principles. In this realm, we can see clearly the extent to which Newar society reflects its Indian heritage.

Although Vajrācārya-Urāy commensuality and the decided de-emphasis of menstruation pollution in the activity of Urāy women



reveal a less stringent Buddhist adherence to the classical norms as compared to the Hindu Shresthas, it is still the case that the ideology of caste pervades Tuladhar life and thought. Tuladhar women guard the purity of their homes and hearth according to a guest's caste. Rituals that have multi-caste participation are caste-segregated: Damai musicians must not eat in the same line with Tuladhar Guñlā Bājan members; parents still insist on their children avoiding untouchables.<sup>1</sup> Although the practices are often less strict in interactions with upper caste groups, Urāy attitudes toward the lower groups are strongly caste-specific and are based upon notions of pollution and the karma doctrine. Thus, Both Hindu and Buddhist Newars share a broad consensus on the structural principles of caste behavior, with ranking based on the purity of birth.

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<sup>1</sup>One Tuladhar family very gracefully informed me that although they would like to have me live in their house for a time (as I had asked their permission for), because I had eaten beef this would not be possible. Although other Tuladhars felt that this was an extreme example, it does reflect the extent to which caste ideology has entered into the community's values.

## THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE ASAN TULADHAR COMMUNITY

### Kinship

Kin ties dominate Tuladhar social life. An individual's major alliances and disputes are most often with kinsmen. As Bott (1955: 383) has noted for urban families elsewhere, "The kinship network stands between the family and the total social environment."

With the exception of a few terms, the kinship system among the Asan Newars is the same as that which is widespread in North India: patrilineal descent, a preference for patrilocal joint extended family residence, emphasis on the mother's brother (pāju) in relations with mother's kin, and status and power formally resting in the eldest males of the lineage (Toffin 1975a).

This centralmost patrilineal group is called the phuki. It defines the goufamily unit that celebrates the life-cycle passages of its individual members. The phuki feasts together often and undergoes corporate pollution together when there is a birth or death in the group. When the phuki group becomes too large and/or when social relations within it become strained, lineage segments tend to break off and sever ritual relations. Although this is a natural (and necessary) social process, phuki splintering usually creates a measure of social discord across the Uray kin network.

An individual's status in the family defines a whole universe of expectations and duties, with age seniority and gender the chief markers. In every ritual and feast in a Tuladhar household, these kin-based norms are acted out in such domains as seating, order of serving, and in the "directorship" of an event.

The marriage circle for the Tuladhars is defined by the entire Urāy community of Kathmandu, constituting nine sub-groups: Tuladhars of Asan, Jhwa Bahā, Nāradevi; Kansākārs, Tamrākārs, Sthāpit, Silpakār, Awa, and Baniya. Women are married outside of recognized same-descent lineages traced back through mother's and father's lines back to at least seven generations. A woman's ties to their natal homes (ta: chen) sustain an important though secondary center of life for them until they reach old age. Upper caste Newar women such as the Tuladhars live a much more secluded and circumscribed life compared to the Newar women in the Jyāpu farming communities (Pradhan 1982). Although divorce and widow remarriage have ancient sanctions, divorces are very rare and widows almost never remarry.

The custom of fictive kin relations (tway) between unrelated friends is discussed in Chapter VI.

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### The Guṭhis

Social life within the family circle and with other Urāy is channelled through a large network of guṭhis.<sup>1</sup> At present, the term "guṭhi" designates a whole variety of voluntary associations that unite individuals to perform certain tasks or services which often have a religious goal or motive at base (Toffin 1975b).

Any function important to Newar Buddhists will most likely be organized on a guṭhi basis. The social contact in the large Asan

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<sup>1</sup>This term originates from the Sanskrit word goṣṭhi and as such has been used in the Valley since Licchavi times (Riccardi 1979: 266).

guṭhis (at feasts, activities, etc.) constitutes the major social networks in which Tuladhar expressions of social consensus and discord occur. Moreover, since the hearth-sharing family is the unit of membership, guṭhi activities draw participants from all generations. They create, at times consciously, the settings in which traditions are passed on to the upcoming generations.

The major guṭhis that Asan Tuladhars participate in are presented in the order of their cross-caste inclusiveness, and, in general, their order of importance.

### Samyak Guṭhi

As discussed in more detail below under festivals (Chapter VII), Samyak is the greatest Newar Buddhist festival.<sup>1</sup> For their part in Samyak, Asan Tuladhars must sew leaf plates which are for the offerings and feasting, and later serve rice on them to all present. For performing these tasks, former generations created a guṭhi that organized all Tuladhar families according to the sub-neighborhoods in which they lived. Each of these units, called a kawa, is led by the eldest male who is responsible for his group's participation. The eldest among the kawa elders is the Tuladhar Tol Thākali. He keeps the guṭhi records and serves as the ritual leader for all of the preparatory rituals. In this work he is assisted by others next senior in line, although the real organizational work may be done by his sons

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<sup>1</sup>Held regularly only once every twelve years, this festival draws all high caste Newar Buddhists together to perform different caste-specific duties. United in this pursuit at Svayambhū, they worship the major Buddhist divinities and feed all of the Vajrācārya and Sākya men in the Valley.

or grandsons.

Over the years since this festival was begun--there is evidence that Samyak started in the fifteenth century (Sakya 1980) -- membership in the Samyak Guthi has come to be regarded by the Asan Tuladhars as the ultimate criterion for rightly claiming membership in the Asan Tuladhar community. The fact that Jhwa Baha Tuladhars are not formally involved in this festival is given as the reason for rejecting them as part of the "real" Asan Tuladhar group.

The Samyak Guthi in Asan is the basis for selecting the Tol's Uray male youth who must participate in the Kumar Pyekhan. This is a tantric dance done every year on three different occasions during the Mohini festival before Taleju, the lineage goddess of the Nepalese king, whose temple is located in the old palace. For this performing, the group has a Pañca Tal Bājan, a musical group in which the Tuladhars play long horns (pañtā), cymbals (ta:), one three-sided drum, and sing. Every five years, boys between the ages of ten and fourteen from the Asan Tuladhar and the Kansakar communities are eligible and one is chosen by lottery. Except in this yearly performance and during the festival itself, the Samyak Guthi is not active.

This guthi corresponds to the deślā guthi ("guthi of the locality") of other Newar caste communities (Toffin 1975b). In other neighborhoods, this guthi has remained active in articulating and working for the betterment of the caste. For example, in the Naradevi Tuladhar community, young activists, with the approval of the elders, have used the kawa structure to organize modern investments with guthi funds and pursue programs of community uplift for their



Plate 44: The Kumar  
Pyekhan Dancer and the  
Pañca Tal Bājan



Plate 45: The Guñlā Bājan

poorer members. In Asan, its inactivity is somewhat of an exception.

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### Guṇlā Bājan

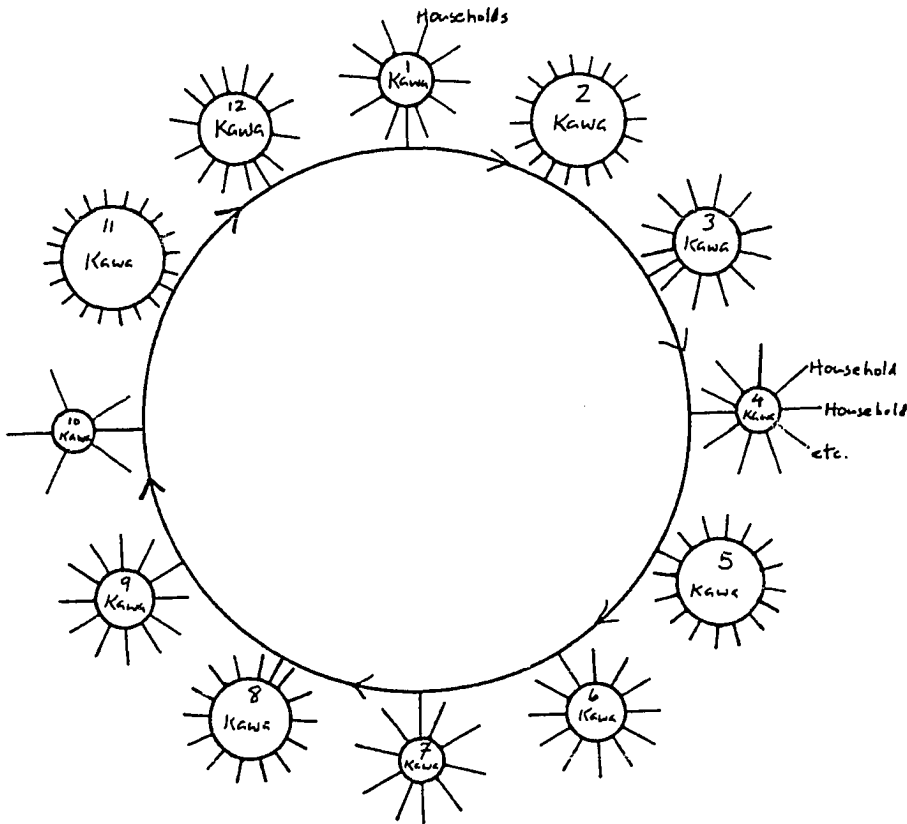
Though not referred to with the term "guthi", the bājan functions as one. Its membership is the same as the Samyak Guthi and is organized around the two yearly periods of religious musical performance by the Tuladhars: the month-long morning visitation of Svayambhū during Guṇlā and the month of playing dhāpa drums before the Annapurna temple during the month of Kartik.

For organizational purposes, the Asan Tuladhar community is divided into twelve groups, each headed by a seniormost leader called a Pālā. Each year the responsibility for organizing and leading falls upon a different Pālā and his sub-group (kawa) according to a fixed cycle of rotation. The system is represented in Figure IV-6 on the following page,

When one group's Pālā turn arrives, the eldest member will organize his "sub-Pālās" to do all that is necessary for the success of the upcoming year's performances. In order of their occurrence, these activities are: teaching sessions for the young men on drum playing and rhythm; preliminary pujas to Nāsa Dya; providing the instruments and a plate of offerings for the daily morning trek to Svaythe Asan Tuladhar community-wide niślā cāyegu feast; and the day-long visitation to the Bahi Dyas displayed all over the city. (For a detailed explanation of the Gunla activities, see Chapter VII.)

Prestige and standing in the Asan community places high value on managerial skill. Serving well as the Pālā is one domain in which this

Figure IV-6: Guñlā Bājan Pālā System



expertise can be shown. Indeed, the Pālā bears the full burden of arranging for all of the logistical needs in the bājan's traditional performances. Tuladhars from other kawas who must take this duty in other years are not required to participate, except out of their own volition. For reasons of prestige and self image, when a Pālā's turn comes, he will take care to fulfill his role conscientiously.

The economic status of a Pālā is also under public scrutiny when his turn comes since he must bear the burden of all costs in excess of the guñhi funds. This dimension of the Guñlā Bājan has lead to



difficulties when the less affluent have been unable to contribute proportionately to the inevitable cost overruns. As is suggested by the diagram, some kawas have declined in size while others have expanded. This has meant that all Tuladhars in Asan do not share equally in supporting the bājan. Because of this problem, the 1982 Pālā began organizing a campaign to make a bank investment fund for the group that would generate interest income sufficient to eliminate this economic hardship and potential disparity. These problems have become a cause of occasional discord and even withdrawal by some from the bājan.

Each year, the Pālā system distributes the duties and monetary costs of the institution that is central to the Tuladhars' Buddhist devotionalism. Under this system, however, it also limits an individual's required participation to one month every twelve years. With the extended family as the unit of participation, it is possible for an individual to avoid involvement altogether if he is so inclined. Thus, even though the Guñlā Bājan draws all Tuladhars into a common, caste-defined set of devotional activities, it must also be seen as a very loosely structured union. Only on one occasion each year, the niślā cāyegu feast, does the entire bājan assemble. Otherwise, it is only to the extent that the full community chooses to participate that the bājan serves to unify the Asan Tuladhars synchronically in devotion. Thus, in contemporary Asan, the maintenance of this tradition is not predicated upon the synchronic solidarity of the group, but rather on the compartmentalization of tasks.

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### Digu Khya Samhiti

Worship of the Digu Dya is one of the principal family (phuki) cults in Newar society. As we saw in the last chapter, these shrines, which are usually no more than specially demarcated stones, are characteristically located outside of the old town wall boundaries.

Just before the turn of the last century, the shrines of many different lineage Digu Dyas were scattered at the edge of the Tundikhel, an open field that lies to the east of the town. Contemporary Newars still remember that Rana Prime Minister Bir Shamshere, who ruled from 1885 to 1901, seized these lands for new building projects and forced the Newars to move their shrines to a plot north of town which he gave them for this purpose. From that time, phukis performed their yearly pujas at the shrines there, in an area called Pakanajol. Over the years, however, squatters began to settle on this land, a trend which has been widespread around Kathmandu City. This encroachment was tolerated until 1975, when several squatters resisted when the Tuladhars tried to gain access to their shrines. This spurred Asan leaders to take legal action through the courts, one of the few attempts of this kind in the Tuladhar community. This protracted struggle culminated in a verdict that cut away most of the land given by Bir Shamshere, but allowed the Tuladhars to secure the remaining land from further encroachment.

The Asan Tuladhars joined with the Jhwa Bahā Tuladhars, who also had their Digu Dya shrines there, to fight the court case. Both groups also united to raise the capital shares needed to build a revenue-generating office building on the land, the proceeds from

which, they anticipate, will eventually be a lucrative source of income for the group. This new organization has efficiently united most of its group by using fairly sophisticated managerial methods. Wealthy Tuladhars have responded to the challenge by creating a new religious institution and establishing a firm economic footing with contributions of over 300,000 rupees from its members. This organization has also led to stronger social relations between the Jhwa Bahā Tuladhars with the Asan Tuladhars.

Every year the group unites to have a Vajrācārya perform the pūjā to each lineage's Digu Dyas. This is followed by a feast and a business meeting which are attended almost solely by the men. Although the two small groups that have their Digu Dyas elsewhere are not part of the organization, the Digu Khya Samhiti has played a most active role in promoting Asan Tuladhar solidarity.

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### Cremation Guṭhis

Tuladhars have two alternatives for managing the crisis of death and cremation in their families. One is to enter into a relationship with the Gons who cremate the body, as we have already mentioned. The other is to be a member of an Urāy guṭhi in which all of the members, called guṭhiyārs, share in the task of making arrangements. For the former, one must also rely on friends to assist in making arrangements for the funeral procession. This is risky as it assumes a measure of social support from one's kin and friends that, for various reasons, may not be forthcoming. On the other hand, having guṭhi ties entails a considerable yearly work burden, but every member can rest assured

that if the occasion arises, all funeral arrangements will be done properly.

There is no special prestige associated with cremation guṭhi membership, nor is there any social stigma for those who are not in a guṭhi.<sup>1</sup> Only if the rites are not carried out in a style that is considered proper for the caste and family will there be social repercussions.

There are two types of cremation guṭhi in Asan: the Śi guṭhi and the Sanā guṭhi. In the Śi guṭhi, the guṭhiyārs arrange for all of the preparations of the cremation procession and then they fully cremate the body, a task that can last up to ten hours. The Śi guṭhiyārs negotiate and pay for all of the costs of the cremation. Both guṭhis also have a Vajrācārya household member; one initiated male must come to perform the last rites for the members in return for "coverage" in the guṭhi.

For the Sanā guṭhi, also called Bicā guṭhi, the guṭhiyārs also arrange for and join the procession to the burning grounds, but once the pyre is lit, their obligations for this day are over. Gons then take care of the burning, dealing directly with a family representative. Although cremations are their speciality, Gons are generally thought to be careless, even irresponsible, in carrying through on the task of fully burning up the corpse. (Some families

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<sup>1</sup>In recent times, one sign of withdrawal from the old ways of socializing is resignation from the cremation guṭhi of one's forefathers and arranging for family cremations independently on a service payment basis. This is often encountered when brothers divide up their ancestral house because of a dispute: one will retain the guṭhi bond; the other will drop all ties and 'go it alone'.

will make special "tips" to try to insure that the Gons complete the burning fully.) Finally, the Sanā guṭhiyārs must pay an early morning condolence (= "bica") visit to the bereaved family on the day after the cremation.

In the Asan community, there are three Śi guṭhis and two Sanā guṭhis. The irrelevance of "pure-Ūrāy" membership in these groups is also shown by the fact that Asan Tuladhars have readily opened their guṭhis to the Jhwa Bahā Tuladhars.

The Śi and Sanā guṭhis are designed to mobilize reliable own-caste labor to arrange for a prompt cremation that is both ritually and socially proper. Each of the cremation guṭhis has about thirty members, which seems to be the number needed for a reliable work force. Membership and its duties are based upon the hearth-sharing family unit. The danger an improper cremation imposes for the deceased --who may not move on to a good rebirth-- and for the family --which may be troubled by the dead one's spirit-- is one reason that the Śi guṭhi still remains strong. When one's own family is shaken by death, this circle of support can be counted upon to arrange for all of the details. If the family is sufficiently wealthy, it will later pay the guṭhi back in excess of all the costs incurred by the arrangements. In the case of Śi guṭhis, the guṭhi also keeps any precious metals (especially gold) which are sent with the corpse to the burning ghat.

At the time of a death, the family notifies the acting Pālā, who then sends messages to all member households. Each is required to send one worker-representative and attendance is recorded by the Pālā with white chalk in an old-style black book (hāku sāphu) which has all

of the members' names written in it. At the end of the year, fines are levied for each instance of a family's non-attendance.

Each year the leadership changes by rotation as part of a three-day guṭhi celebration; for all of the Asan groups, this comes soon after the Saunti festival. On the first day, the guṭhiyārs go to the guṭhi's patron goddess to make offerings and eat a beaten rice feast. (For the Asan Śi guṭhis, the aṣṭamātrkā goddess Indrayani is the patron goddess.) The Vajrācārya priest affiliated with the guṭhi performs a secret puja at the temple and all the representatives receive prasād. On the second day, another puja is performed in the āgam of the Pālā's home. This is followed by a very large feast that should not end before midnight. Guṭhiyārs are given clay wick lamps (phalcā) to find their way home.

On the third day, guṭhiyārs spend the entire day together, preparing yet another feast and playing at cards and other games. The past and future Pālās figure the past year's costs, add up the members' fines, and collect the money that is owed. For this evening's feasting, families in which a death has occurred give special sweets to the group to express their appreciation. Fathers and/or grandfathers announce the birth of male children with similar gifts. At the end of the meal, the new Pālā often makes a short speech that invariably includes his wish that no one die during his term.<sup>1</sup> Late into the night, a small procession forms to accompany him home and transfer all the guṭhi properties: cult objects of the patron goddess (paintings and images), the brocade dyawai cloth which must be draped

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<sup>1</sup>On the other hand, it is considered a bad omen if no one dies during a Pālā's tenure.

over the corpse in the cremation procession, the hāku sāphu , and other ritual objects. Playing the chacha (or damaru) drum and carrying the guṭhi properties, the guṭhiyārs walk with the Pālā using small lamps to light the way. No one in the procession must speak until the properties are deposited in the new Pālā's āgam so that other town residents actively avoid meeting these processions.

The cremation guṭhis have tended to be very durable institutions. One reason for this is the efforts Tuladhars have made to provide for the rising economic costs. The gold and other donations by bereaved families is now placed into a bank account. The interest income is used to supplement the guṭhiyārs' yearly contributions and offset the sum the Pālā must provide in case of a cash shortfall. Wealthy bereaved families often contribute considerable sums to the common fund. In the cremation guṭhis, the Pālā has full autonomy in handling the funds and may lend them out to another guṭhiyār for a year at interest. Even with these resources, being Pālā still entails considerable personal expense for the myriad incidentals.<sup>1</sup>

Provision is made for son-less Tuladhar widows to be members in the cremation guṭhis. They can pay a yearly fee and help at the yearly winter feast in return for "coverage" by the guṭhi.

As Toffin (1975b: 224) notes, the high caste cremation guṭhis have adapted well to the changing times in Nepal. Since Hodgson's era, the funeral specialist castes have mostly disappeared as part of

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<sup>1</sup> A brother who splits up from a single household will seek to postpone the guṭhi's recognizing his separation since his household constitutes a new unit of membership. According to the rules, new family heads must be added immediately into the Pālā rotation and serve next in that role.

the widespread breakdown in intercaste cooperation.<sup>1</sup> To cope with the "religious emergency" of death, these guṭhis insure that individuals in their group will have a speedy cremation, a goal that maintains high class dignity and lessens the danger of the departed one becoming a preta ("hungry ghost").

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### Other Guṭhis

In my survey sample of the Asan Tuladhar community, I discovered twenty-eight different guṭhis. This most certainly represents a substantial decrease from only two generations past since almost every family in my sample mentioned cases of guṭhis now lost due to the lack of landed income, personal interest, or both.

Guṭhis are almost always founded upon a religious purpose (Regmi: 1976: 46). They channel devotional activity toward a specific deity and at regular time intervals. Membership in these guṭhis may vary from a handful of Tuladhar households to a large, multi-caste group. As in the cremation guṭhis, the Pālā role rotates through the group under various systems. There is also considerable variation in the financial structure of these guṭhis. Those that have survived to 1982 seem to have been successful at minimizing the financial hardships of being Pālā by developing an interest income from a bank deposit or through a lending system. Guṭhis must also be understood as economic institutions that help generate capital funds to its entrepreneuring

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<sup>1</sup>For this reason, we suspect that the Śi guṭhis are more recent additions to the Tuladhar tradition.



members. Surviving guṭhis have also tended to be successful at securing the land endowment income upon which most, at their founding, were built.

Every guṭhi also has its own distinctive set of properties -- images, ritual implements, records, etc.--which are in the safekeeping of the Pālā. A standard scenario reported in the death of a guṭhi involves the suspicious loss of the art or ritual objects by a Pālā after which the resentment and disputing over the case lead to its demise.

In the Table below, a representative sample of the guṭhis of Asan is given to provide a sense of the field of guṭhi endeavor and organization.

Figure IV-7: A Sample of Guṭhi Types Among the Asan Tuladhars

1. ĀGAM DYA GUṬHI

Guṭhiyārs: 5, all Tuladhars

Income source: Land endowment

Religious Dimension: worship of the Āgam Dya

Comments: All members are of the same family lineage; Pālā duty changes each year.

2. TILA BRATHA GUṬHI

Guṭhiyārs: 8, all Tuladhars

Income source: land endowment

Religious dimension: celebration of the Basundhara brata once a year

Comments: Painting, text, sand maṇḍala template, and other ritual implements passed along to Pālā each year; all guṭhiyārs are eligible to celebrate the brata with the Pala's family each year, but most choose not to do so.

3. SAṆLHŪ SEVA GUṬHI

Guṭhiyārs: 19, all Urāy: Tuladhar, Tamrakar, and Kansakar

Income source: bank interest only

Religious dimension: Mutual assistance at the time of death in the group; mutual assistance at other times.

Comments: On the first day of every solar month (saṅlhū), there is a group feast.

#### 4. GAMSI AJU PYON TĀYEGU GUTHI

Guthiyārs: 4, all Tuladhars

Income source: bank interest; rental of a guthi-owned house

Religious dimension: large yearly śrāddha pūjā for departed ancestors

Comments: Founder reported to be a merchant who died without sons.

#### 5. YEDA GUTHI

Guthiyārs: 12, all Tuladhars

Income source: land endowment

Religious dimension: worship of Bhairav during Indra Jātrā (Yeda)

Comments: Up to several years ago, the guthi displayed a large wooden mask of Bhāirav in the street outside the Pala's house; now it is only shown inside the Pala's home. In 1981, the Pālā reported that he could not get the Jyapu cultivators to turn over the guthi's share of grain (bāli). This is one of the most popular guthis among the Uray.

#### 6. CAKAN DYA GUTHI

Guthiyārs: 7, all Tuladhars

Income source: land endowment

Religious dimension: the worship of the Dipankara image carried through the streets of Asan during the Cakan Dya Jatra

Comments: There has been no bāli collected from the fields for the last ten years; several recent Palas have failed to perform the pūjā.

#### 7. SAKAPA GUTHI

Guthiyārs: 8 Tuladhars, 4 Sakyas

Income source: land endowment

Religious dimension: Whitewashing the Svayambhū stupa's anda during the Buddhist holy month, Gunlā.

Comments: Landed income stopped when the tennant Jyāpus threatened the Pālā if he asked for payment; now runs without traditional yearly feast.

#### 8. PAÑCA DĀN GUTHI

Guthiyārs: 4, all Tuladhars

Income source: land

Religious dimension: Streetside offerings to the Vajracaryas and Sakyas during the Pañca Dān day during Gunlā

Comments: Once had over 20 ropanis of land (=2 1/2 acres), but now all has been lost; dāna still collected and given by individual members.

#### 9. BHIM DYA GUTHI

Guthiyārs: 12, all Tuladhars

Income source: interest from principal

Religious dimension: Yearly large-scale pūjā to Bhimsen at the temple of Bhimsenstan on Bhim dya aṣṭamī

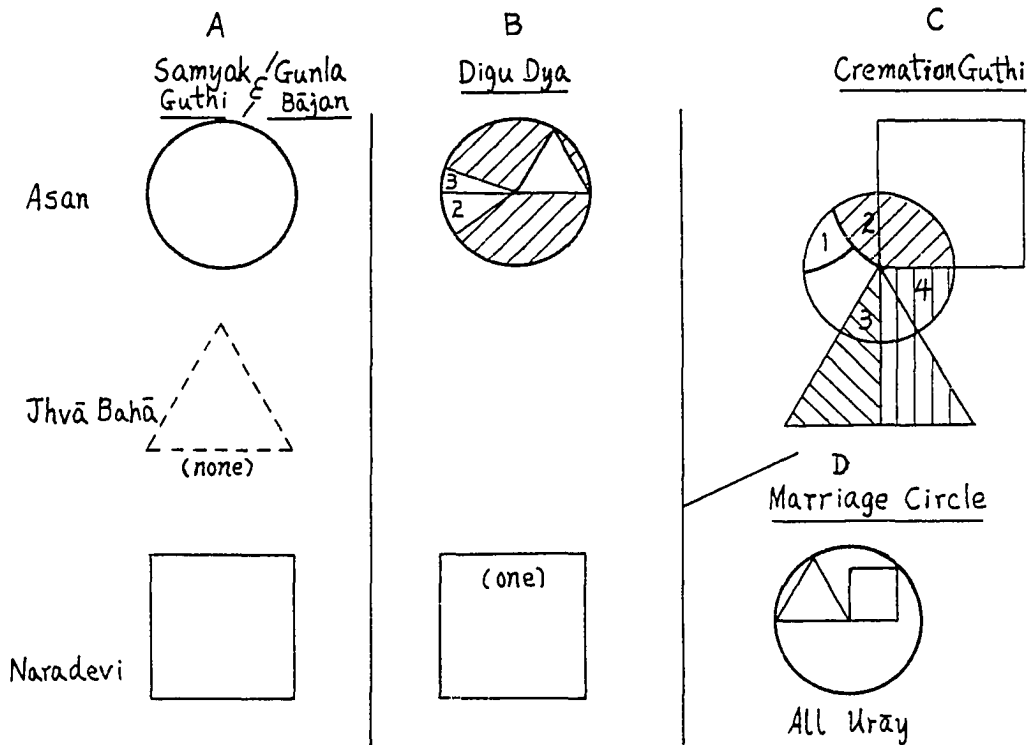
Comments: Each year the Pālā usually loans out the guthi money at 10% interest; this interest pays for the feast that follows the yearly pūjā.

10. CHOBAR SEVA GUTHIGuthiyārs: 7 Tuladhars, 2 TamrakarsIncome source: individual contributionsReligious dimension: a trip every month on the bright eighth day of the lunar month (śukla aṣṭamī) to worship Karunamaya-Avalokitesvara at ChobarComments: Once a year, a feast paid for by the year's Pala is given.11. JĀMA CHO GUTHIGuthiyārs: 4 TuladharsIncome source: land endowmentReligious dimension: Worship of the Amitābha image at the stupa on Jāma Cho hill at the time of the festival there, in Magh. The guthiyārs also bring up water for the pilgrims who make the three hour walk up from town.Comments: Guthi survives now only with the determined work of one guthiyār; he says that he gets only a little bāli from the land.12. JYA BULU GUTHIGuthiyārs: 3 TuladharsIncome source: individual contributionsReligious dimension: on a chosen day during the yearly festival, the group goes to do a puja to Karunamaya-Avalokitesvara in his ratha and have a feast.Comments: Guthiyārs invite close friends to go in return for preparing a dish for the feast; the group now hires a minibus.

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Having described all of the major social groups in the Asan Tuladhar community, we can now show this rather complicated and interwoven structure using a schematic diagram. We also note what the relationships are between the Jhwa Baha Tuladhars, which overlap on several levels, and with the Naradevi Tuladhars.

Figure IV-8: Major Social Groups in the Asan Tuladhar Community



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Bhajans: Devotional Music Groups

The oldest devotional music played by the Newar Buddhists is that of the Gunla, Dhapa, and Panca Tal Bajans. This musical tradition emphasizes drumming and singing as offerings to the deities.

Until the later Rana period, the bhajan style of devotional music was practiced only by Hindu devotees in the Kathmandu Valley. Taking up instruments (tabla, sitar, harmonium, violin) and compositions

imported from India, Newar Buddhists have incorporated this type of musical playing into their own tradition in the past thirty years. Tuladhars have learned the instruments, composed songs to the Buddhist divinities, and formed groups that now organize singing every night just as Hindu Newars do.<sup>1</sup>

In Asan, bhajans meet regularly in public resthouses. The five in the study are can be presented summarily in the following table:

FIGURE IV-9: BHAJANS IN ASAN TOL

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Dominant group</u>	<u>Religious identity</u>
Annapurna Jñāna Mālā	central Asan	nightly	Tuladhar	Buddhist
Jana Bahā Jñāna Mālā	Jana Bahā	nightly	Shrestha	Mixed, but Hindu
Nāṣa dya Jñāna Mālā	Kamalachi	nightly	Shrestha	Hindu
Nyakhan Tol Jñāna Mālā	Nyakhan tol	Saturdays	Shrestha	Hindu
Krishna Mandir	Bāl Kumārī	Major festivals	Shrestha	Hindu

As with other organizations, the bhajans show a wide spectrum of variance as to their internal structure. The Asan Jñāna Mālā Bhajan has been most active in introducing modern practices into its framework, such as leadership by elected bhajan officers, an accounting system that publishes a yearly balance sheet, and printed songbooks. It is also an intercaste group, though dominated by

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<sup>1</sup>Some of Nepal's finest musicians on the violin, sitar and harmonium have come from the Tuladhar community in Asan Tol.

+ Plate 46: The Nisla Cayegu Feast of the Guṇlā Bājan +



+ Plate 47: The Asan Jñānamālā Bhajan +

Tuladhars. In recent years, Asan Tuladhars have often turned to the bhajan to organize special events. In this domain, the bhajan Thākali ("leader") has thus become one of the leaders in the Asan Tuladhar community.

Most groups assemble nightly after many shops have closed and sing for a little over an hour. The bhajans are open to all who wish to join in, although the evening's program of singing is usually dominated by regulars in the group. At the times when major festivals are held in Asan (Jana Bahā Jātrā, Samyak), the finest musicians of the Annapurna Jñānamālā Bhajan, who usually do not come every night, make it a point of attending.

The Jñāna Mālā Bhajan at Svayambhū should also be noted for many Tuladhar men participate there and contribute financially. This group of Newar Buddhists is composed of many castes from all over Kathmandu. The bhajan plays in the resthouse adjoining the main stairs at the hilltop on all important days of the lunar month and especially on major Buddhist festival days.

In Asan, a typical evening's playing begins with offerings to the gods of the bhajan site, a hymn to Nāṣa dya, Ganesh, and then moves to "Govinda", in which all of the important gods' names are recited and during which a conch is blown. The balance of the evening's songs are the choice of the participants. Hindu singers will commonly sing devotional songs to the great Buddhist divinities (Jana Bahā Avalokiteśvara, Shakyamuni Buddha, Basundhāra, etc.); Buddhist singers will likewise sing devotional songs to the great Hindu gods. The only firm contrast between the Hindu and Buddhist groups is in the use of ganja (marijuana): the Hindu groups use it regularly whereas

the Buddhist bhajan players never do so. The conch is blown again to signal the last sequence of hymns as an oil wick lamp is lit and shown to all of the bhajan house gods. This offering light is called arati and after it is offered to the gods, the men hold their fingers close to the flame, then touch them to their eyes and foreheads. A short hymn to Nāṣa dya usually is the last of the evening.

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A synchronic observation of these bhajans reveals that usually only fifteen to twenty men come out each evening, a very small percentage of the Tuladhar community. Looked at over a longer period, however, the bhajan's importance becomes clearer: over the course of a year, a much larger sample of the population attends. In 1981, for example, we found that about 55% of Tuladhar men attended the bhajan at least once that year. Furthermore, depending on many inter-related factors such as household demands, business, and personal activities, Tuladhars move in and out of the active bhajan circle. Most Tuladhar men have had a period of active participation in the bhajan so that most can sing at least several songs from memory.

When the large bhajan convenes, good, enthusiastically-rendered songs of devotion and praise to the deities abounds. As the bhajan has grown in popularity, the bhakti dimension of Mahāyāna lay Buddhism has been emphasized. This trend also reflects the extent of Indian influences on modern Newar life, a fact that is illustrated by the popular use of Hindi film melodies for bhajan songs. However, Tuladhars feel pride in their adaptation of this musical genre but with Buddhist songs of their own composition as the content. The words and ethos expressed in the Newar bhajan capture the modern



character of Tuladhar Buddhist devotionism as no other cultural form does. As one Tuladhar layman said to me: "You can study the sūtras to find the Buddhist views of our tradition and you can watch the mumbo-jumbo of the Vajrācārya to understand our rituals. But if you want to seek the rasa ("taste") of our Urāy Buddhist Dharma, you must listen to the bhajan."

Thus far we have identified the major castes in Asan Tol , defined the nature of group interaction from the Urāy perspective, and examined the norms and institutions that organize Tuladhar social life. We now move to consider the traditions of ritual and celebration that are found in this Buddhist community.

CHAPTER V  
Ritual in the Lay Buddhist Community: I

A common scene occurs when a Tuladhar family tries to complete arrangements for a ritual it has undertaken. The Vajrācārya priest, who arrives an hour late, calls out for articles not yet assembled and the young women of the house rush back and forth to the kitchen trying to fetch the missing items. In the midst of the chaos, the family head, an older man, will make a joke, often directed at the guruju, about just how much trouble the ritual really is, how never-ending the lists of offerings, or how inconvenient the schedule turns out to be.

To both the anthropologist and one another, Tuladhar laymen often remark on the futility of trying to fulfill all of the ritual requirements properly. "If we did everything they once did," said one middle-aged Tuladhar man, "we would be doing nothing but pūjās." There is always a better and more elaborate ritual gesture in any one case, someone of the older generation says. Many Tuladhars feel that the ancient traditions are too detailed, time-consuming, and, generally, a burden.

The abundance of creative energy that went into artistic achievement also seems to have been at work in the ritual life of the Newar community. With astrological calculations also determining the key moments, Newar traditions framed with ritualism every significant event that occurs in an individual's lifetime, large or small, from conception to long after death, in celebration and in mourning.

The elaboration of ritual is immense. A recent Vajrācārya

handbook on rituals lists over 125 "major" pūjās (Vajrācārya 1981).<sup>1</sup> In this large corpus, there are patterns of regularity: most life cycle and other rituals can be broken into standard "units" that tend to be assembled in consistent structural patterns. Still, the cumulative ritual tradition is vast. Even the best of priests must refer to ritual texts to do all but the most common pūjās.

The elaborate ritualism in Newar Buddhism must also be understood in relation to ritualism in India. The Vajrayāna Buddhist movement that grew in importance from the fifth century CE onward represented a critique and, simultaneously, a fulfillment of Mahāyāna philosophy. Its chief exponents and exemplars, the Siddhas, initiated the sādhana traditions that ignored the scholastic monasticism and its slow approximation approach (Sankrityayana 1934). The Siddhas introduced the means to see and control śūnyatā directly by associating with the Buddha's three "secrets": Body (mudrā), Speech (mantra) and Mind (samādhi) (Wayman 197: 443). Through these means, the Vajrayāna masters showed the immediate possibility of reaching śūnyatā to attain enlightenment, and adapted these soteriological processes to other purposes such as ritual service. The scholars who eventually organized the sādhana practices eventually introduced a new strand of Buddhist culture that emphasized initiation, fierce deities, and ritual in its soteriological program. By the Pālā period in northeast India (c. 750-950), this movement was the predominant Buddhist "vehicle" (yāna) there (Dutt 1962: 389).

After this "third turning of the law" (as the Tibetans call it) ,

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<sup>1</sup>This still represents a decline over past eras, as there are fewer major pūjās given than in similar texts of fifty years earlier.

later generations of Buddhists within the tradition could regard the basic religious questions as solved. The philosophical basis of the universe and the means to realizing enlightenment quickly had been fully discovered, articulated, and elaborated by past saints and philosophers. The only major issue that remained, outside of transmitting this, was to apply this system to life in a given society.

Judging by the central Sanskrit texts still referred to by the Newars, it is clear that this development took place in the Kathmandu Valley. This standpoint within the Vajrayāna tradition may, in part, explain why Newar Buddhist tradition seems to lack a strong philosophical/scholastic dimension. What is carefully elaborated is the ritualism that expresses and interjects the Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna world view into every conceivable juncture: for relating to deities, celebrating festivals, and moving an individual through his lifetime. Lacking in scholarship, its "genius" lies in its pervasive orchestration of Vajrayāna rituals and teachings which channel blessings, well-being, and --for those willing to practice-- movement toward enlightenment. In this respect, Newar Buddhist tradition carries on the evolutionary patterns set by the tradition in India. As such, it should be considered the last outpost of Indian Buddhist tradition.

As we will see, this tradition which we call "Bahā Buddhism" has been slowly devolving. At present, there is no widespread understanding of the most common rituals' meanings and their purposes among the Tuladhars. Although most tend to know the mechanical fundamentals of what is done, very few grasp even the most basic

philosophic assumptions. Even among the Vajrācāryas, only a few of the oldest members relate to the rituals beyond the procedural level of proper order, mantras, and purity. Nonetheless, tradition is so deeply embedded in their lives that it continues to survive.

This chapter describes the ritual observance in the Tuladhar community. After starting with the simplest lay offerings, we move to the four pūjās basic to the Vajrācāryas' ritual service and the other roles they play as pandits and religious leaders. We then discuss the family cults, initiations, bratas, and other ritual programs that define the Tuladhar practice of Buddhism. Even though many observances have been lost in the last century, the vastness of the cumulative tradition of Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna ritual remains as one of the most distinctive characteristics of Newar culture.

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#### Pūjā: General Practices

Given the ubiquitous shrines in the religious geography of Kathmandu town, a Tuladhar's movement through the streets usually is made with reference to the shrines he must pass. One always tries to keep shrines on one's right, for example, adding a pradakṣiṇā ("circumambulation") of major temples along the way.

Newar Buddhists likewise have a distinctive greeting that begins many social interactions. When greeting one another, old style Tuladhars say "Tāremam", a phrase derived from Tārā Saranam meaning "I go to Tara for Refuge."

We have already seen that the Urāy concern with pollution and

purity is very important in affecting daily life. Their conformity to Indian high caste practice is seen in their separation from low caste groups in commensality, in their dealing with normal self-generated daily pollution (cipa; Nepali: jutho), and when worshipping.

One major concern is the correctness of procedures followed in performing a ritual. Very often argumentative exchanges within the family or social group will erupt over whether an actor's duty is being performed in a manner that is "ju" ("proper") or "maju" ("improper"). This awareness permeates the Tuladhar lifestyle, suggesting the extent to which a ritualistic attitude has been incorporated.

Many of the layman's regular encounters with the divinities in the Buddhist pantheon are managed without priestly intervention. These ritual idioms are common throughout the Indian subcontinent (Babb 1975; Gombrich 1971). The layman's attitude is that all divinities--celestial bodhisattvas or local spirits--may be approached as if they had human attributes. In practice, this means that offerings are made with the purpose of satisfying their five senses. This common order in all lay offerings is organized according to two sets of pūjā groups: the pancopacāra pūjā and the pancopahāra pūjā (Vajrācārya 1981: 1). Both represent standard pūjā components and can be done by anyone. The items for each are as follows:

Figure V-1: Pancopacāra Pūjā and Pancopahāra Pūjā

<u>Pancopacāra Pūjā</u> (Necessary items)		<u>Pancopahāra Pūjā</u> (Sense Gratified)
1. <u>puṣpa</u> flowers		1. sight mirror
2. <u>dhupa</u> incense		2. hearing bell
3. <u>dīpa</u> light		3. smell <u>tika</u> (balm)
4. <u>sinha</u> balm		4. taste <u>food</u>
5. <u>naivādyā</u> food		5. touch thread

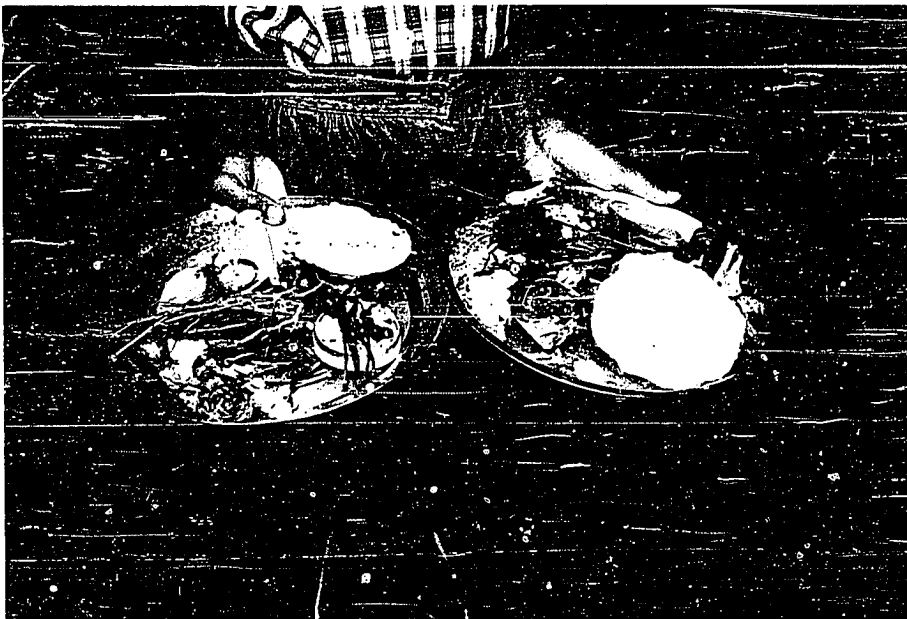
Other important substances in Buddhist rituals are: tarpana, a libation of pure water; pañcāmṛta<sup>1</sup>, "the five ambrosias": milk, curds, ghee, honey, sugar; pancagavya, "the five cow products": milk, curds, ghee, urine, and dung which are usually mixed with darva grass; and argha, a concoction of pañcāmṛta, dubo grass, jasmine flower, unbroken rice grains (ākhāy), and a coin, all placed in a conch shell.

When worshipping at a major shrine, all of the pancopacāra substances are typically placed on a pūjā tray, pūjā ba:, and handed up to the temple attendant. He takes all of the foods and most foodgrains, places the wick light and incense on the shrine, and removes the flowers, replacing them with other already sanctified flowers. Once he hands the tray back, all of the contents are prasād, a substance equated with amṛta ("ambrosia") (Stablein 1976: 366). The layman can now mix red sindur powder with the water to make the ṭikā marks that almost always mark Newar foreheads. Devotees also place the flowers on top of their heads, sip the water, and eat the special prasād foods. Extra prasād may be taken for family and friends, as its material effects are thought to be medicinally beneficial. This regular distribution of prasād adds a communal dimension to a religious tradition that in other realms is highly individualistic.

A further dimension of ritual worship is darshan, when the devotee looks at the divinity's image, especially its eyes. This, along with a namaskār gesture (hands pressed together at chest height as in prayer), comprises the simplest method of lay worship. Other

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<sup>1</sup>This term also conotes a different set of substances in the Buddhist tantras (Wayman 1973: 115ff).



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Plate 48: Pūjā Ba:

Plate 49: Giving Pūjā  
at a Shrine and Offering  
as Redistribution





gestures such as touching one's head to the deity's feet (aṅ yāye), full body prostrations (danot yāye) and circumambulations (pradakṣiṇā, dya cheli yāye) are also in this category of individual ritual gesture.

The actual form of the daily offerings in temples can vary within these possibilities according to the preferences of the person preparing the pūjā tray, and of the offerer. Other factors such as the lunar day can affect the pūjā. There is no difference in the form of ritual offerings made to deities like Ganesh as compared to those given to the celestial Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. They only contrast is in the details of what is acceptable: for example, for the bodhisattvas and Buddhas meat or alcohol offerings are maju. Tuladhars informants do not see any difference in the quantity of puṇya ("merit") derived from offerings to clearly Buddhist divinities from those made to Śiva or Vishnu.

Since offerings are made with the purpose of satisfying the senses, the devotee seeks to please the deity so he (or she) will grant favors and insure the well-being of self and family. Sanctified and empowered prasād is the physical manifestation of this exchange of offerings in return for blessings.

Pūjā is regarded by some Tuladhars as an elementary religious discipline that focuses the mind on giving and on the divine qualities of the deity to whom the offerings are made. Darśan establishes the momentary identity of the deity with the devotee, an action which has beneficent effect on the devotee's mind. The discipline of giving is also linked by some Tuladhars with the first Buddhist pāramitā ("perfection") of dāna ("giving") which is valued because it



Plate 50: Darśan



Plate 51: Making Sand Chaityas by the Riverside

reinforces the experience of non-attachment. Many Tuladhars add that pūjās must also include a wish for the happiness of all beings. Thus, propitiation is only the exoteric level in the Newar Buddhist understanding of ritual activity.

Pūjā has other aspects in the Newar context. Exchanges are the means of materially supporting the temple attendants who perform the needed service of maintaining the purity of the shrines. Pūjā also redistributes food to the destitute in the community who come to beg at the chief temples, especially on major festival days. In addition, making pūjā offerings imparts a daily sense of the elements basic to human life (water, fire, air, earth, foods). Because Tuladhars offer to their gods whatever foods and flowers are in season, daily pūjā implies an awareness of what is available in their material world. Finally, for laymen initiated into esoteric Vajrayāna practices, pūjā is also sādhana (see below) with the deities one worships. These elementary and complex levels of pūjā--from satisfying a deity's senses to comprising the constituents of deep religious experience--exist at all levels of Newar Buddhist ritual activity.

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#### The Repertoire of Urāy Family Ritual

Five standard rituals are done by laymen in the household as part of larger religious occasions: Las Khus, Dau Sagan, Khe Sagan, Tailla luigu, and Bentali. Under this heading we must also mention dietary and menstrual restrictions in Tuladhar households.

### Las Khus

Las Khus is a ritual of welcoming for individuals or deities at extraordinary times. With the designated entranceway flanked by two large lamps (jwālā deva) and ceremonial vessels (kalash) and marking the ground beneath marked with a swastika and covered with a straw mat (sukhu), the eldest woman of the house (thākali-naki) greets the honored one with offerings that he (or she) will make to the house gods. She then pours an auspicious assortment of offerings (bits of fruit, flowers, rice) over the person's head three times, a gesture called siphon luiyegu or pathi luiyegu. As other women of the house lead the way, one sweeping the ground with a ritual broom, another pouring purificatory water, the thākali then walks with the arrivee. Both clasp the house keys in their right hands as they enter.

This ritual can also be done at the entrance to a room where a person is about to undergo a life-cycle rite. When a Vajrācārya is present as the officiant, he also may give the thākali his vajra to hold with the keys; his bell (ghanta) may also be used for siphon luiyegu.

Las Khus often signifies a change in the existential status of the arriving person and renews the fact of the household's openness to him or her.

### Dhau Sagan ("Yogurt Sagan")

Both types of sagan are used to mark an auspicious event. They are served most commonly in the circle of close kinsmen, uniting them in worshipping a god (usually Ganesh) and sharing special foods. Sagan is also presented by the thākali-naki to a line of seated



Plate 52: Las Khus: Clasp ing the household's keys, a bride is led into her new home by her mother-in-law.

recipients who arrange themselves according to seniority. Sagan can be given to women (e.g. a bride leaving the house to be married) so that seating can vary based upon the occasion.

After purificatory water is offered to all right hands in the line, a sukunda lamp, usually with Ganesh as the chief deity, is lit. After all in the line have honored the tray of offerings (pūjā ba) by touching their right hands to it and then to their foreheads (añ yāye), the person at the head of the line and closest to the sukunda performs a panchopacāra pūjā to it with items he takes from the bowl held before him. The thākali then gives the leading man a ṭikā and then the puja items for a second set of offerings which he holds. She also bows down to him after giving him these items. The recipient then lifts his handful of offerings to the forehead (añ yāye) and then puts it down on the floor in front of him. To complete the first man's offering sequence, the thākali then dabs a bit of yogurt on his right temple. (A woman gets the yogurt on her left temple.)<sup>1</sup> The rest of the line is then given the same second cycle of offerings to their right hands. When all are served, the pūjā ba is brought down the line for all to perform an añ yāye touch again. With this, a single sitting of dhau sagan is finished.

If a Vajracarya is present, he will sing a stotra called men sagan biyegu for the duration of the ceremony and will be given a handful of offerings, like everyone else there. He will not take ṭika from the thākali, but will apply it to himself.

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<sup>1</sup>This differential gesture very likely has its roots in the Vajrayāna tradition, but none of my informants could explain the reason for the practice.

### Khe Sagan ("Egg Sagan")

The khe sagan differs from dhau sagan in the items involved, but follows the same general order.

In preparation, the thākali-naki smears three dabs of yogurt onto the outside of each cup (sali) and the other vessels to be used in the ceremony. To start the ceremony, she brings all of the sali and filled vessels down the line for all to aṇ yāye. The person at the head of the line lights the sukunda and worships it as described above. The thākali then gives him a sali that is filled with rice beer (twoṇ) and holds this in his left hand. Next she gives him a hard-boiled egg and a small dried fish, which he holds in his right hand. Custom specifies that one must not put the sali down or eat the egg and fish until all are served and three rounds of twoṇ have been served to and consumed by all. Additional rounds of distilled spirits (ayla) are usually added after this. After pure water is brought by for all to wash with and the sukunda is again passed to each person for aṇ yāye, the ceremony is complete.

If a Vajrācārya is present, he will chant mantras over the vessels used before the start and sing the maṅgala dakṣiṇā stotra during the ceremony. He will be served second after the head of the line has made the offerings to the sukunda.

Very often, both types of sagan are offered at a single occasion. At such times, the dhau sagan usually precedes the khe sagan.

### Tailla luiyegu

Tailla Luiyegu is a ritual of welcome honoring a person on a special day, most commonly a man's birthday. (Women do not have their birthdays celebrated, as we will discuss later.) The thākali-naki takes a pathi container (normally used to measure units of grain) filled with flowers, rice, and specially prepared sweet balls (tailla) made of molasses and sesame. She dumps three loads of these substances over the person's head. This rite is usually followed by sagan presentations.

### Bentali

Senior members of the phuki sit together and formally don long white cloths called bentali that are wrapped around their heads after the successful completion of a ritual the family has sponsored. To wear this in public is considered a great honor. After doing so, women of the house serve sagan to them.

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### Dietary Observances and Restrictions

It is an old custom for Tuladhars to set out a bit of each food from their plates on the ground in front of them before eating. This action, called dya cāyekegu, is an offering to the deities. It must be done before a person starts eating. Tradition even specifies a term for this class of foods, ghāsā. Various ghāsā are designated for different deities and for different feasts held during the year. Most laymen are unaware of any special significance to the different



ghāsā. Some knew that the five ghāsā were for the Panca Buddha and the eight ghāsā were for the aṣṭamātrkāś. The practice of dya cāyekegu as a daily observance is in general decline, especially among the younger Tuladhars.

Tuladhars follow the pan-Indian pattern of eating on the floor seated in lines with their caste members only (Harper 1963). They also conform to high caste practice by not eating beef and pork. Although there is some spiritual prestige associated with being a vegetarian, very few Tuladhars practice this abstention. Indeed, buffalo meat has a central place in Newar feasting.

Idiosyncratically, Tuladhars abstain from eating chicken meat and eggs. The reason given for this is an injunction attributed to Shakyamuni Buddha. As one informant told the story:

"When the Buddha was attacked by his evil cousin Devadatta, his foot was injured. Later, when the wound became infected with worms, a chicken came to his aid, pecking them out so that the wound could heal. In gratitude, Bhagawan Buddha blessed the chicken and exhorted his followers not to eat the flesh of this bird."

The Tuladhars eat duck eggs instead.

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### Menstrual Restrictions

A significant difference between Hindu and Buddhist Newars can be seen in the rigorousness of the restrictions placed on women who have their menstrual periods. For the Tuladhar women, this time imposes limitations on participating in the rituals: they cannot carry purified water or touch pūjā trays. Unlike the Shrestha women, they continue to cook at the family hearth and sleep in the bedroom with

their husbands. There is less avoidance behavior and less fear of the "danger" of this state, as compared with their Hindu counterparts. These differences may reflect the influence of Mahāyāna philosophy (Yuichi 1982: 75).

It is interesting to note that this less rigorous attitude is regarded somewhat ambiguously by Tuladhar women. Buddhist Newars have fewer ritual prohibitions to observe during their periods but, unlike the Hindu women, do not enjoy the enforced "vacation" (as one Tuladhar woman called it) from the tedium of housework that the latter do gain.

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#### Daily Ritual Activities

As in many other facets of religious life in Asan, there is a broad spectrum of preference and daily variation in the religious offerings made by individual households. One factor affecting the nature of these offerings is the lunar day, with puṇhi, the two aṣṭamīs, amai, and saṇhū being the most important days for the Buddhist community. (For a discussion of the lunar cycle, see Chapter VII.) The style and quantity of daily offerings also varies in magnitude according to the economic status of the family.

The daily household pūjās can be divided into those done inside and outside the house in the morning, those done in the evening, and those done in the family shop. The in-house pūjās are almost always done by the women and they are performed every day of the year. The only exception to this schedule is when the phuki is in a collective state of pollution due to a birth or death.

### In-House Pūjā

After the person making the morning pūjās has washed, and before anyone eats, she (or, rarely, he) will make offerings to all of the active shrines in the house. This pūjā will include all of the deities of the pūjā kothā and the āgam dya.

Families vary in the extent to which they make the full pancopacāra offerings each day. The in-house morning pūjās usually conclude on the rooftop with a lighted wick offering to the sun god, sūrdya, and offerings to Svayambhū.

If the person making the pūjā rounds has a nikhan initiation, she will usually pause to do the daily mantra chanting required when she is in the pūjā kothā or āgam. Other family members may also make offerings as part of their morning nikhan. The pūjā tray is left in the pūjā kothā for this purpose.

### Pūjās Outside

After the in-house offerings are complete, the same person usually goes out to make offerings to the local shrines. In Dagu Bahā, families make offerings to all of the chaityas in the courtyard, the kwāpā dya and the shrines around it, Luku Mahādya, and the bau ga.

The extent to which families send pūjā outside the bahā varies according to the principles mentioned above. Almost all Tuladhar families in Dagu Bahā reported sending daily pūjā to Avalokitesvara in Jana Bahā and to the major gods of central Asan, Ganesh and Annapurna.

### Evening Pūjās

Most of the Dagu Baha families make wick offerings after sunset to Chandramā, the moon god. On returning home for the last time at night, individuals often pause along the route for a darshan of the main deities in the Tol and then of the bahā's kwāpā dya before going inside the house. Sometimes a family member who has made offerings will bring flower prasād home for the family.

On the major days of the lunar month and without fail on puṇhi, the full moon, Dagu Bahā residents light the wick stand lamps around the asok chaitya. In addition, on these days the early evening is the time for individuals to do pradakṣiṇā in large circles around the bahā chaityas.

### Ritual in the Shop

Each day right after opening the shop, most shopkeepers light a wick lamp and some incense, and place them before the niche shrine or picture of Bhīmsen. As mentioned in Chapter III, this mighty god is regarded by both Hindu and Buddhist shopkeepers as a protector against theft and an ally who brings prosperity.

Throughout the day, the shopkeeper is also offered prasād from a changing cast of pūjā bearers. One regular is a Vajrācārya from Ta Che Bahā who brings a pūjā plate with tika and flower prasād from the Mañjuśrī shrine at Svayambhū. Others from other temples in the Valley come through Asan less regularly and go from shop to shop: Pasupati, Maitī Devī, Bhīmsensthan Bhīmsen, Bunga dya, and Bhadrakalī were regularly represented in 1980-1981. In return for prasād, the shopkeeper usually gives 5 pice as a stipend.

Destitute men and women also beg from shop to shop throughout the day. While less than forty percent of the Tuladhars gave to them, about sixty per cent gave to Hindu sādhus and one old renegade Buddhist monk who made regular rounds.

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### Periodic Cults

#### Birthdays

Special birthday pūjās are sent out to a series of temples for the males of the Tuladhar household. The choice of deities worshipped on these occasions is very standard<sup>1</sup> in the Tuladhar houses sampled: this seems to be the result of the recommendation by the family Joshi at the time that he determines the actual birth anniversary. The Joshi also makes a pronouncement on the individual's condition within the systems of nakṣatras (lunar positions), harṣa yog (relative placement of the sun and moon), karna (solar location), and lagan (stars visible in the east) as these impinge on the special day. Based upon this reckoning, special pūjās may also be prescribed.

In the house, elaborate pūjās to the household shrines are carried out. Most families call their guruju to lead the celebrant through a pūjā to the Nava Graha, "The Nine Planets", for the sake of his well-being.

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<sup>1</sup>This circle of birthday pūjā includes: Mahāṅkal, Pālā dya, Asan Ganesh, Annapurna, Jana Bahā-Avalokiteśvara, and Lhuti Ajimā.

After all of the rituals are complete, he is honored with a tailla luyegu ceremony and the two sagans before being served a special morning meal. The celebrant's Pāju (mother's brother) may come to make an offering of sweets. Family members may also make special gifts.

### Digu Dya

The Digu Dya is best defined as a "lineage god". Tuladhar families keep the ornaments used for worshipping at the outside-town shrine in the āgam or pūjā kothā. If they have these ornaments in the home, families usually make offerings to them for the Digu Dya daily as part of the regular daily pūjā round.

The family worship of its Digu Dya is done twice during the year on a large scale: once any time during the month before sithi nakha and once in the month after the Saunti festival. On the former occasion the family Vajracarya priest is called to do a kalash pūjā (see below). Tuladhar informants say that over the last twenty years, the common practice of sacrificing a goat to the Digu Dya has been abandoned.

### Family Monuments

If a family lineage has built a religious monument, once a year on the anniversary of it's founding or on Si Puṇhi it must call a Vajracarya to lead them in offering a special homa pūjā (see below) at the site. If the monument is a chaitya, they will clean it, perform the ritual, and then have a small family feast.

## Festivals

Many of the festivals of the year call for special ritual observances in the individual family households. These rituals are discussed in Chapter VII.

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### RITUALS PERFORMED FOR THE TULADHARS BY VAJRĀCĀRYA PRIESTS

The Vajrācārya priests, like the Hindu Brahmins, are specialists in ritual performances. By knowing the order of the rituals, the correct mantras, mudrās, and offerings, and as a result of the initiations that enable them to act as suitable invokers and bodily conductors of divine forces, they are the hierophants necessary for the proper and successful worship of the deities.<sup>1</sup> In keeping with the characteristic tenets of the Vajrayāna tradition, the rituals performed by the Vajrācāryas operate simultaneously at two levels: the mundane which are directed toward appeasing deities and assuring prosperity; and the supramundane which directs the initiated in the deeper meanings toward Buddhahood (Wayman 1971: 402). For most laymen, the former level is the predominant concern and motivation.

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<sup>1</sup>Some Tuladhars insist that in the past their predecessors were able to obtain the initiations and instructions necessary to perform the basic rituals and that some did perform most of the rituals now done for them by the Vajrācāryas. I found only one case of a Tuladhar who regularly did his own guru maṇḍala pūjā.



Plate 53: A Vajrācārya Priest Holding his Vajra ("thunderbolt Implement") and Ghanta ("bell")



Plate 54: A Vajrācārya Priest Leading a Tuladhar Jajmān Through a Nava Graha Pūjā



a commentary on the popular text, the Nāmasaṅgīti, a modern pandit, Dībya Vajra Vajrācārya, explains the philosophical understanding that is the foundation of the priestly Newar Vajrayāna ritual tradition:

According to the mantrayana, all moveable and immovable objects are composed of mantras. There is the moon in the external world; it is represented by the symbol " ". The sun is represented by two dots, ":". "i" is air, "r" is fire, "u" is water, "a" is sky, "lu" is earth, "m" is the plant kingdom, "ksa" is the animal kingdom including man, and "h" is the invisible phenomena (mikha khane madupin arūp dhātu: "formless things not seen by the eye"). These basic constituents can be conjoined into a single symbol of these ten "seed syllables"<sup>1</sup> (bija mantra). This symbol represents the idea of the world.<sup>1</sup> (My translation of D. Vajrācārya nd: 4.)

Thus, by knowing the mantras and the ritual means of using them, the Vajrācārya has the power to manipulate the physical world and the divinities. In this role the Vajrācāryas accept the pan-Indian notion linking the sound of mantras to ontological appearance.

The following section presents a brief summary of the four major rituals done by the Vajrācāryas. All of these are done in the name of the Tuladhar family and require a family member, ideally an elder, to take an active part. At the start of the pūjā, there is also a communal dimension: all family members who are in a pure ritual state touch the pūjā ba: containing the offering materials. For this short

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<sup>1</sup>These can be conjoined into one figure, which is sometimes seen adorning older Newar houses:



ceremony called pūjā ba: thiyegu, the guruju chants a dedicatory mantra and speaks the name of everyone present. Likewise, at the end of a major ritual, all who did thiyegu should come to throw the final rice offerings.

### Guru Maṇḍala Pūjā

This ritual is performed at the beginning of every puja performed by a Vajrācārya. In it, the Mount Meru maṇḍala symbolizing the phenomenal world and/or the practitioner's body (Wayman 1973: 87) is offered to the Triratna, i.e. the "triple gem" of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and to Vajrasattva, chief celestial Buddha and patron deity of the Vajrācārya caste.

After drawing a chalk circle maṇḍala on the ground and sipping pure water three times, the hierophant locates the ritual being done according to the sacred shrines with Kathmandu as the center. He also mentions the intention of the pūjā and the layman's family.

The priest takes a handful of paddy from the patron, symbolizing his taking the jajmān's pāp as his own. After further purifications with water and mantras, and after empowering the ritual vessels he will use (conch shell, vajra, bell, containers), he worships the chalk-demarcated guru maṇḍala with water and with rice, praying that he might gain the fruit of the six pāramitās -- dāna, śīla, ksānti, vīrya, dhyāna, and prajñā -- by worshipping the maṇḍala.

Further pancopacāra offerings to the twenty-three deities arranged at the compass points are accompanied by pancopacāra offerings and mantras spoken for each. The Vajrācārya then takes refuge in the TriRatna (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha) and hopes for the

attainment of Buddhahood. He then recites his own guru mantra 108 times, worships the eight lokapālas and the eight protectors of the Buddhist tradition. Once these are bound into place around the maṇḍala by means of mudras and mantras, they are worshipped by the guruju 's puspadi puja ("flowers etc." meaning pañcopacara puja plus puḍrās, bell ringing, mantras, and a pure water oblation) appropriate to each.

These protectors are again worshipped with rice beer (twoṇ) and mantras for the purpose of preventing malevolent krodhas, a class of demons, from harming the ritual. Vajrapani, Maha Krodha, and Bhāirav are also worshipped for this purpose. Yet another round of pañchopacāra offerings is made including: a five-stranded string for the five Buddhas (yajnopavitadi vastram); an offering of milk that is equated with amṛta and the enlightened mind (bodhicitta); lajaksata, an offering of parched rice and unbroken rice grains. The last is accompanied by a stotra known from ancient times:

He Dharma Hetuprabhavā Hetu Tesām Tathagata Hyavanat Tesām Yonirodha evam Vānī Mahāśramaṇa.

("For the phenomena that proceed from a cause, the Tathagata has revealed the cause, and so their extinction-- so the great Śramaṇa has spoken (Locke 1980: 93).")

Following this are offerings for Mañjuśrī that end with a 100 syllable mantra of Vajrasattva.

The Vajrācārya then takes a ṭikā and flower prasād for himself, gives the same to the jajmān and any others who took part, and then dismisses the deities, thanking them for their attendance and power.

This outline of the guru maṇḍala ritual has been given to



Plate 55: A Vajrācārya  
(right) Giving Tīkā

Plate 56: A Vajrācārya  
Making Mudrā gestures --  
as Part of a Homa Pūjā



underline the thoroughgoing Mahāyāna- Vajrayāna content of the Newar tradition's most common pūjā. The ritual reiterates the same spatial order as is found in the Valley's topography and constitutes a short hand reference to the levels of reality in the Vajrayāna cosmos. If the ritual is understood, it is clear that basic notions of later Buddhist tradition are emphasized: the pāramitās, the concept of bodhicitta, the Bodhisattva ideal, Pancha Buddha cosmology, the Buddha as causal analyst, and the inferior status of popular Hindu gods, nāgas, and yakshas as protectors of the Dharma. Through the guru maṇḍala pūjā, these central themes are incorporated into every Newar Buddhist ritual. This is where the "genius" of the Newar's tradition is most clearly discernible.

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### Kalash Pūjā

Named after the water vessel that is central to the ritual, the kalash pūjā is the form under which many different deities are worshipped. Based on the notion that a priest can coercively summon the divinity into the kalash through ritual means, the Newars share a tradition in common with Newar Hindus that originates from ancient times in India. The Vajrayāna Buddhists, however, incorporate another level of meaning: sādhana or "communion" with the deity. As stated in a modern Newar commentary:

The main aim of the Kalash pūjā is to make the deity present in the kalash by means of sādhana and then through the abhisekha of the kalash bring about a participation in nirvāṇa itself (Locke 1980: 96).

The ritual itself can be adapted to the special requirements of different gods. To begin, the kalash is placed either in the center

of an eight petaled lotus (symbolic of Mt. Meru) or at the center of the maṇḍala of the deity to be worshipped. Next to the kalash, a bowl of curds , symbolic of bodhicitta, is placed on top of a swastika, whose intersecting lines symbolize prajñā/upāya ("insight/skill in means"), two fundamental concepts in later Buddhism. A vessel for pūjā offerings to the nāgas of the Kathmandu Valley, who are worshipped in every kalash pūjā, is also placed next to the kalash. The remaining necessary objects are: a simple maṇḍala to Herukasamvara, a vessel of milk with dubo grass, another vessel with milk and flattened rice (baji), and a conch shell on a small stand.

In preparation, the kalash is filled with five grains of parched rice, five grains of uncooked red rice, ghee, honey, a jasmine flower, a peacock feather, and cane of long grass. During the ritual, ni la: (which must be river water or fresh well water) is also added. Kisli, a cup containing uncooked rice, whole betal nut, and a coin is placed on the lid.

The ritual consists of six discreet movements which are given here in outline form:

(1) Preliminaries:

1. The guru maṇḍala pūjā
2. Worship of the Herukasamvara maṇḍala
3. Offerings to the Lokapāla guardians
4. Panchopacāra pūjā to the ṭikā container
5. Prayer to Vajravārāhī, consort of Heruka
6. Ṭikā smeared on all ritual vessels
7. Gurumandala pūjā for the jajmān

(2) Summoning the Deity

1. Recitation of two mantras that establish the purity of dharmas and their emptiness:  
Om svabhāvasuddha: Sarvadharmā Svabhāva Sudoham. ("Om All Dharmas are pure by nature and I am pure by nature")  
Om Sunyatā Jñānavajra svabhavatmakoham.

("Om. My nature is of the same nature as the Vajrajñāna of emptiness.")

2. Offerings of incense as an assistant pours water into the kalash from the conch shell
3. Sādhana with the deity, repetition of the deity's mantras

(3) Protective Rite

1. Pūjā to the eight cremation ghats, asking the resident aṣṭamātrikās to protect the maṇḍala
2. Offerings placed in earthen vessels (alu)

(4) Calling the Deity Down

1. Panchopacāra offerings to the kalash
2. Recitation of the deity's mantra, 108 times, with the guruju's vajra placed on the kalash
3. flower offerings to the curds and the lamp

(5) Worship of the Evoked Deity

1. Panchopacāra pūjā offerings
2. Mudrās presented
3. Hymn of praise chanted
4. Vajra placed on the kalash while the "Hetu" verse is chanted
5. Dakṣiṇā offered to the deity
6. Vajrasattva's mantra chanted

(6) Dismissal Rites

1. Kalash deity dismissed
2. Guru maṇḍala deities dismissed
3. Lokapālas dismissed
4. Stipend to the guruju, prasād to the jajmān

This outline indicates the simplest form of the kalash pūjā. From the ritual after the introductory guru maṇḍala, the Vajrācārya acknowledges the chief tantric deities in their tradition, Herukasamvara and his consort Vajravaraḥi with special offerings, purifies himself in body, speech and mind, and then invokes the special deity in the pūjā for receiving offerings. After making offerings in the name of the jajmān, all of the gods assembled are dismissed.



Plate 57: Preparing a Kalash Pūjā



Plate 58: Sahasra Pūjā Performed by Three Vajrācāryas



A most common variant that seems to have been adapted from the Tibetan tradition is the sāta pūjā, "pūjā of the Seven". The major modification is the offering of 108 cups (kisli) of rice and water along with 108 lamps, incense sticks, and barley cakes (tormas). This pūjā is for Avalokiteśvara and the number 108 corresponds to the 108 different manifestations of this divinity recognized by Newar tradition. Another expanded version of this type of kalash pūjā, the sahasra pūjā, is also done. As the name suggests, 1,000 of these same offerings are made.

#### Homa Pūjā

As with the kalash pūjā, the homa pūjā has roots reaching back to ancient Indian civilization. The Newar Buddhist ritual also offers a thoroughgoing contrast with the Newar Hindu homa, showing the pattern of reworking and reinterpreting an ancient ritual form with Mahāyāna/Vajrayāna concepts. The roots of this Buddhist homa clearly date back to at least the eighth century, where it is mentioned in a ritual text, the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa (Locke 1980: 103). In contrast to the exoteric Hindu homa, the Newar Buddhist homa incorporates mantras and sādhana practices to give esoteric meaning to the outward gesture of offering thirty-two foods to a specially consecrated fire. According to a Newari commentary, the purposes of the ritual are as follows:

The homa rite, called yajñavidhana, gives the fruit of satisfaction and mukti to living beings, averts calamity in the country, and brings peace...the homa rite satisfies the gods...its main aim is to provide peace to the whole world (Locke 1980: 106).

The homa is really an adjunct to the kalash pūjā and like it, can

be performed only by a Vajrācārya. The ritual has seven movements and starts after the completion of a kalash pūjā. In outline form, it proceeds as follows:

1. Preparatory rites
  1. Consecration of the fire pit (kunda) and the offering ladle
  2. Mantra to Vajrasattva
  3. Panchopacāra offerings to the kunda
  4. Panchopacāra pūjā to the firewood
  5. Fire is lit
  6. Offering of each of the 32 grains to the kunda
  7. Verse to Agni, the fire god,
  8. verse of dedication for the jajmān
2. Evocation of the Samaya Deity: Agni
  1. Guruju evokes the "samaya dya" Agni, out of himself
  2. Out of the ether, he evokes the jñāna dya, also identified as Agni
  3. He dissolves both identifying them with himself (ahamkara), then infuses the fire with Agni
  4. Panchopacāra pūjā to the kunda protectors
  5. Panchopacāra pūjā to ghee poured into the ritual ladle to which the jajmān adds sesame seeds that have been touched to his body; ghee then dumped into the fire. This symbolizes the destruction of the jajmān's pāp.
  6. 32 grains offered to the fire
  7. Milk offered to the fire as the mantra of Vajrasattva is chanted
3. Evocation of the Jñāna Dya
  1. Guruju again consigns Agni to the fire, taking kalash water, and chanting mantras
  2. Offerings of welcome
  3. Mirror, kalash water, pancha amrita, and conch water offered to the fire
  4. Kalash water sprinkled to all of the jajmān's family
4. Further Offerings
  1. Puspādī pūjā to fire
  2. Casting a flower, representing Agni, into the fire
  3. Panchopacāra pūjā to the fire
  4. Mudrās displayed
  5. Bell rung
  6. Hymn of praise chanted to Agni
  7. Hetu stotra chanted
  8. Agni mantras chanted
  9. 100 syllable mantra of Vajrasattva chanted
  10. 108 offerings of sesame seeds to the fire

### 5. Bali Pūjā

1. Around a simple bali maṇḍala, offerings to the lokapālas
2. Salutation to Vajrasattva chanted
3. Salutation to the aṣṭamātrikās of the eight cremation grounds
4. Prayer for the king
5. Prayer for the jajmān
6. Jajmān offers a flower to the gurumaṇḍala
7. Jajmān makes offerings to the aṣṭamātrikās
8. Jajmān's family offers several rounds of thrown rice offerings to the bali, at the guruju's command

### 6. Final Fire Offerings

1. Reiteration of summoning of Agni, with mantras and mudrās
2. Special offerings to the fire: (in order:)  
bel fruit, with prayer for the jajmān, fruits, clothes (in the form of threads), flowers, incense, wick, coconut, herbs, three fruits, banana, sugar cane, radish, thick bread, herbal medicines, betel nut;
3. 32 grains, ghee, string, and coin to the fire
4. Prayer to Agni
5. Ladle honored by jajmān touching it to his head
6. Pancopacāra pūjā to fire
7. Mudrās displayed
8. Bell rung
9. Hymn of praise to Agni
10. 100 syllable mantra to Vajrasattva chanted

### 7. Concluding Rites

1. Release of the guru maṇḍala deities
2. Guruju gives ṭikā to himself, to the jajmān and family; the latter give dakṣiṇā in return
3. Agni worshipped with panchopacāra pūjā
4. All remaining grain offered to fire
5. verse chanted:

"Happiness to all living beings, those that move and those that do not.

I salute the Buddha, who is above all scriptures, who is worthy of receiving respect from all men.

Today I salute the Dharma which is peaceful, non-passionate, worthy of respect by gods and men.

Today I salute the Sangha which is worthy of respect by gods and men; let it prosper in their favor.

May all beings who are present here, all on earth and in the sky have feelings of friendship for all people.

May they walk the way of the Dharma day

and night.  
 Consume that which is offered.  
 May this man who has given the  
 offerings accomplish what he  
 desires.  
 For this intention, I make this  
 offering." (Locke 1980: 110)

6. panchopacāra offerings
7. Mudrās displayed
8. Hymn of praise
9. 100 syllable to Vajrasattva
10. Vajra touched to all vessels
11. Nāga offering from kalash pūjā
12. Kalash water sprinkled the head and hands of all present

The average duration of the homa pūjā is about three hours.  
 There is nothing uniquely Buddhist in the outward form of the homa pūjā, but the Buddhist gloss on the performance of the fire offering and the ritual technology assert Buddhist power and realization.

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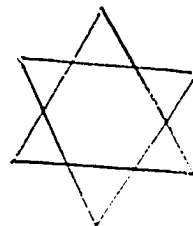
### Kumari Pūjā

The Kumari Pūjā is usually performed by a family at the time of any major life cycle rite. Because this pūjā is accessible only to the nikhan-initiated Newars (see below), we can only outline this important pūjā sketchily.

With everyone on fast, the guruju draws a Vajradevi maṇḍala on the floor with red powder.<sup>1</sup> He covers this with a leaf plate filled

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<sup>1</sup>This maṇḍala's shape is as follows:



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Plate 59: Homa Pūjā

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Plate 60: Dagu Bahā: The Gurujū Sets Out with the Morning Nitya Pūjā

with uncooked rice and then puts a full feast plate including meat offerings and samāy (beaten rice, ginger, soybeans, steamed meat). After the thākali completes a caka: pūjā put out into the four directions, all present make offerings to a paṭa ("painting") of a Joginī put up for the pūjā. The guruju, now assisted by his wife (gurumā, or else another Vajrācārya woman) draws another Vajradevi maṇḍala and places a small image of Kumārī on top of it. The latter also offers three liquors to the image: āylā ("distilled spirits"), Hyaugu twn̄ (red rice beer), and twn̄ (regular rice beer). The offerings are finished when all throw uncooked rice toward the image.

After the Tuladhars give the guruju dāna offerings, the prasād from the pūjā is distributed in a ceremony called Panca Khus Pūjā. This is done by a man and a woman, ideally a husband and wife, with widows always prohibited. In effect, they distribute the prasād from the Kumārī pūjā to all present. Their order is given as follows:

Figure V-2: Pancha Khus Pūjā Offerings (Served together)

<u>Man's offering</u>		<u>Woman's offering</u>
<u>būlā</u> , a raw meat	+	<u>āylā</u>
fish	+	red <u>twn̄</u>
meat	+	<u>twn̄</u>
egg	+	<u>twn̄</u>
<u>būlā</u>	+	<u>āylā</u>
<u>khay</u> , puffed rice	+	<u>twn̄</u>
<u>cwela</u> , "steamed meat"	+	<u>twn̄</u>
<u>samāy</u>		

The man serves the meats in a special human skull vessel (or skull-shaped vessel), an item associated with the Jogini class of goddesses. The woman pours from the different pūjā vessels into every

individuals small sali cup. According to normal pollution-purity standards, the distribution of the foods spreads cipa, ritual impurity, to all partaking. For this reason, the pūjā is done only if all present are Tuladhars. Thus, just as Tuladhars receive their most desired form of prasād they also assert ritual equality and communion with their castemates. For those few with advanced Vajrayāna initiations, the symbolisms involved, which most would not discuss, have other levels of meaning. Thus, in the Newar Vajrayana tradition, untutored laymen participate in the tantric without philosophical awareness and cult for mundane reasons.

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This description of these four chief rituals gives a sense of the degree of ritualism in the religious life of the Tuladhars. The Vajrācāyras' rituals entail an elaborate series of offerings and complicated ritual actions. To the outside observer, all of the intricate movements of breaking flower petals, throwing rice, pouring oblations and mumbling mantras seem unrelated to Buddhist teachings. Without a ritual text that charts the doctrinal connections or an educated guruju's explanation, these rituals do seem unconnected to the philosophical levels of the tradition. Although the Tuladhars continue to sponsor these pūjās, most do so for the worldly reasons (pacification deities, receiving empowered prasād), unaware of the underlying teachings.

The rituals done in Tuladhar households are clearly "applied Vajrayāna". We have highlighted lay participation in rituals and alluded to the verses that refer to the philosophical ideas that have

been explicitly inserted. This discussion of the major rituals bears clear evidence that the Newar Baha Buddhist tradition has had a thoroughgoing infusion of Mahāyāna/Vajrayāna ideology and empowerment as designed by the great ritual masters of past generations.

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### Vajrācāryas as Temple and Bahā Pūjārīs

Each morning in Asan, Vajrācārya priests perform the nitya pūjā (daily offerings) to the major deities in the temples and bahas. Although serving as the ritual officiant (pūjārī) is considered a religious duty for their caste, these pūjās purify the temple precincts ritually so that laymen may have full access to the deities. In a more general sense, the Vajrācāryas' rituals are intended to satisfy the local deities; if successful, the entire community benefits.

We return to Dagu Bahā to describe an example of this daily ritual service:

The eldest male of the resident Vajrācārya family performs the nitya pūjā in the morning only. After making offerings to the āgam dya upstairs, he exits from the house with a fresh puja tray containing the offerings. He unlocks the two old-style locks on the door to the kwāpā dya, puts the tray on a table, then sweeps the inside area with a feather broom and sprinkles pure water around the area inside.

He replaces the water in the seven offering cups set out in a line before the main image, Akshobhya. Other offerings from the tray--ṭikā powder, a lit lamp, incense, and water--are also made to this deity. He then rings his ritual bell, touching the tray of offerings, and chants a dedicatory verse from the guru maṇḍala pūjā.



He gives flowers, uncooked rice, water to Akshobhya and then waves a metal ritual mirror toward the image.

The Vajrācārya makes five flicks of tika powder to the standing Avalokiteśvara image and then puts flower prasād on all of the images' heads. He takes a flower and puts it on his own head, rings his bell, and throws rice in the four directions.

He touches the feet of Akshobhya and then his own forehead with his right hand, effectively bowing his head to the god's feet. He does the same to Avalokiteśvara.

To conclude his inside offerings, he rings the fixed bell 108 times with his left hand as he fans the images with a yak tail with his right.

Leaving the inside area, he makes small offerings from the pūjā tray to the stone images in the niches outside. He then moves to the Asok chaitya, then to the four chaityas nearest to the kwāpā dya. For these, he actually gives the offerings to the western niche only, i.e. to the Directional Buddha Amitābha. (Because of a long past disagreement with the builders of the most remote chaitya, he does include it in the ritual round.)

In Dagu Bahā, the one hundred and eight ringings of the kwāpā dya bell is a regular daily occurrence and so a reminder of the Vajrācārya's role in the religious life of the residents. This is a good example of the observation that those living on a bahā courtyard live in a cultural environment that is fully Buddhist.

### Vajrācāryas as Storytellers

Some members of the Vajrācārya caste tell stories from the Buddhist tradition as part of their service to laymen. Although they once did so only in private homes, in recent times they have emulated

the Brahmins and Theravadin Bhikṣus in telling stories before large public assemblies. Usually in the evenings for a minimum of several weeks, the Vajrācārya pandit will sit on an elevated platform and recite from one or more Sanskrit texts in succession, pausing to translate and explain them in Newari. Most of the stories are from the popular literature of the tradition, the jātakas (stories of the Buddha's previous births) or the avadānas (other types of Buddhist stories).

Each evening, laymen will make offerings to the text before the recitation begins. One man, usually a sponsor, will then go through the crowd of listeners during the program, giving ṭikā and flower prasād as the listeners give dakṣiṇā in return. At the end of the series, the sponsors organize a procession for the Storyteller. Accompanied by musical groups, he is taken to his house where laymen make special donations to him.

Another significant new twist in this public teaching is an occasional lecture series on philosophical topics. During my research period, Kathmandu's leading Sanskrit pandit, Dibya Vajrācārya, gave two lecture series in Asan: one on Abhidharma philosophy, the other on Prajñāpāramitā. The former ended with a formal quiz contest among the women on Abhidharma topics.

+ Plate 61: A Vajrācārya Storyteller



Plate 62: A Vajrācārya Touches the Head of a Child with a Pañcarakṣā  
Text

### The Vajrācāryas' Other Role Dimensions

The Vajrācāryas must be regarded as a class of literati in Newar society. As such, they competed with the Newar (and other) Brahmins for wealthy patrons. (The most notable of course was the king.)<sup>1</sup> Their literacy and control of the Sanskrit texts also enables them to serve in other capacities. Vajrācāryas chant protective texts (usually the Pañcarakṣā) at the major Buddhist temples on major lunar days. At these times, laymen can come, make a small offering, and receive a touch of the text to their heads as a protective blessing. Some Vajrācāryas in Asan Tol also serve as specialists in astrology and Ayurvedic doctors.

Finally, respected Vajrācāryas may be asked to intervene as mediators in local disputes. During my study, Tuladhars requested that one popular guruju help resolve a problem over a guṭhi's right to shop space.

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<sup>1</sup>It is in this context of royal patronage that we might posit one avenue of the Brahmanization of Vajrācārya practice and consequently, the Newar Buddhist tradition. (We treat this subject in Chapter VIII.)

### MEDITATIVE TRADITIONS

Traditional Urāy Newar Buddhist identity and intellectual understanding is rooted in the Vajrayāna initiations. For the Tuladhars, these open up access to restricted rituals, impart doctrinal teachings that make the ritual tradition intelligible, and introduce meditation techniques handed down from ancient Vajrayāna tradition. All of these serve to deepen the Tuladhar understanding and experience of Buddhist teachings.

The Vajrācārya priests are the only legitimate source of Newar Buddhist initiations. It is in this role as initiating teachers and meditation guides that the Vajrācāryas became the guru-ju ("honored teacher") of the Urāy. As Wayman points out, the classical lay relationship with these hierophants is crucial to advancing on the Vajrayāna path:

One must find a capable guru, called the "diamond master" (vajrācārya), serve him with suitable presents, and petition to be conferred in the initiations (abhiṣekha) which mature the stream of consciousness along with taking vows. Through the worship of the deity (devapūjā), the mundane and supramundane fruits are made possible (1971: 443).

Newar initiates are instructed never to reveal their mantras or any details of the practice to anyone else<sup>1</sup>, even family members. The

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<sup>1</sup>Before going further into these traditions, it is important to make clear the methodology I followed in studying these and other Newar traditions which are not open to outsiders such as western anthropologists. At present, the Vajrācāryas control access to all of the Buddhist initiations. Without an initiation, even young Tuladhars and the lower caste individuals cannot view the restricted pūjās. Unlike the Tibetan lamas, who will give initiations to whomever the judge to be sincere aspirants (including westerners), the Vajrācāryas do not consider non-Newars fit to receive any of their initiations.

penalty for doing so is illness or death. Not only do the Vajrācāryas impose secrecy, they also limit the number of suitable recipients to the highest castes in Newar society: the Sākya, Urāy, and certain Chitrakār artisans. The two traditions discussed here are the most important still in existence among the Tuladhars.

### Nikhan

It is normative for every Tuladhar adult to do Nikhan every day of his life once he is initiated. Once ritual adulthood is reached, it is expected that individuals will take this simple initiation. Taking Nikhan is required for participation in the Kumārī pūjā done for many of the life cycle rites. The khus pūjā at the end of this rite is limited to those with Nikhan.

For a son or daughter to receive Nikhan (often it is taken on a group basis), the family calls its guruju to the house. With the initiates fasting, the eldest woman welcomes them into the pūjā kothā

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(As one guruju said to me, "Perhaps you will be reborn in your next life as a Newar.")

Thus, I learned about the traditions I was prohibited from observing from the accounts of Tuladhar informants. This limitation made it very difficult at times for, as we discuss in Chapter VIII, the entire Newar tradition hangs together through these initiations and the pūjās associated with them. By carefully questioning informants and slowly filling in my understanding, I feel that the portrait made in this study on these subjects is an accurate one. Because this class of rituals is not subject to observation and because the practitioners who know the most are usually unwilling to talk directly about these subjects, this study is not as exhaustive as it could have been. I have also, at times, written less than I discovered because to publish more would be to break promises of not telling others the content of specific confidential information (such as mantras) that they shared with me. This situation is not ideal from the scholarly perspective, but it is as the Newar initiates, gurus, and devotees would prefer. With gratitude for what they have shared, I must limit my presentation out of respect for their traditions.

with las khus. Once they are seated, the guruju and his wife (or another Vajrācārya woman) lead them through a guru maṇḍala puja and another pūjā centered on the maṇḍala that he draws. The key moment occurs when the guruju whispers the meditation mantra into the initiates ear. Afterwards, the family presents sagan to the newly initiated. On the next two mornings after this initiation, the Tuladhars must visit the guruju at his home to check that they know their mantras properly.

I could not find any example of a Tuladhar receiving Nikhan in which any philosophical explanation was part of the initiation, nor could any individual identify the deity associated with the mantra. The same mantra is given to all Tuladhars, a fact often mentioned to me by laymen.<sup>1</sup> The mantra is associated with Samvara, a Vajrayāna deity.

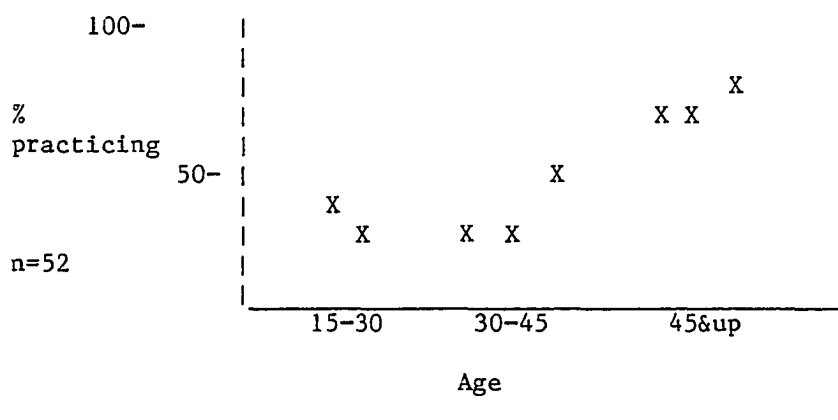
Daily Nikhan practice is the simple recitation of the mantra, 108 times for men, 54 for women. This must be done "on fast" so that most do it right after washing in the morning and before the first meal of the day. For the repetition of the mantras, the Tuladhars use rosaries that are given to them by their family elders at the time of initiation.

There has been a very marked decline in the practice of doing Nikhan, especially among those forty and younger. According to my survey, the age/ daily Nikhan practice correlation in the Tuladhar community is as follows:

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<sup>1</sup>Most had obviously talked among themselves on the subject.

Figure V-3: Nikhan practice in the Tuladhar Community



It is now common for the young men and women to delay taking the initiation and, later, to fall away from taking the ten minutes necessary to do the mantras on a daily basis.

The Vajrācāryas' neglect of everything but the formal, mechanical aspects of meditation, say some informants, is a good example of the failure of modern gurus to act as teachers. Modern Tuladhars have little idea what relationship Nikhan practice has to Buddhist doctrine.

### Dekka

Dekka (Skt: dīkṣā) is a secret initiation given by only a few Vajrācāryas in Kathmandu town who are the remaining meditation masters in the Vajrācārya community. Although personal qualifications such as good character and morality are mentioned as the classical preconditions for individuals receiving Dekka (cf. Shukla 1975), in modern times it is given to any eligible caste who can afford to offer sufficient dakṣiṇā to the initiators: in 1982 this amounts to at least



Rs. 1500. An Uray can acquire Dekka alone, but most properly it is taken with one's spouse. Nowadays it is also taken by groups of couples to cut down on the cost involved. Tuladhars usually take Dekka well into middle age, though any time after Nikhan is approved.

Once the arrangements have been made and the groups of initiates assembled, the chief Vajrācārya places a group of Vajrayāna images and hanging paintings (paṭas) in a sanctified room. (If done on a family basis, this room is the āgam.) The initiates are blindfolded and then worship the guruju. They are then led into a room illuminated only by wick lamps; after their blindfolds are removed, the guruju then moves from deity to deity, explaining the iconographic symbolism in relation to the central concepts of the Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna tradition: prajñā-upāya, śūnyatā, bodhicitta, etc. . He also repeats the mantras associated with each deity. For this first darshan, no questions are allowed. Informants mentioned the following deities as Dekka dyas: Hevajra, Heruka, Vajradevī, Tara, Samvara, the Four Joginīs.

The guruju then instructs the initiates in the kundalini system of meditation. This form of meditation instructs aspirants in visualizing a "subtle physiology" of three channels within their bodies. (See the preceeding plate for one rendition of this model.) Using breathing techniques and mantras, practitioners seek to generate and control a psycho-physical force called bodhicitta. The goal is to direct the bodhicitta upward through the central channel, called the susumna. As progress is made, the adept can move the bodhicitta further upward through a series of cakras ("lotus-shaped wheels") located at the level of the navel, heart, throat, eyebrows, and at the top of the head. Each cakra has a presiding deity around which a

maṇḍala is visualized: these maṇḍalas are the content of the practitioner's meditations and mantra repetitions. In addition, the Dekka initiate is taught to locate deities on the exterior of the body, a process called nyāsa. If the adept can cause the bodhicitta to move to the top of his head, he experiences Enlightenment.

Proceeding with the initiation, the guruju touches his vajra and bell to these locations on the body of the initiate as he explains. He also teaches prāṇāyana, techniques of breath control (Bharati 1965), as the central discipline in initial Dekka meditation. For seven consecutive mornings, the group assembles for further instruction and questions. They must fast before each session and abstain from certain foods: onions, scallions, and tomatoes. Toward the end of the week, the guruju may also perform the tantric dances of specific Dekka gods, wearing costumes representing the iconographic qualities of each. Many of these costumes include aprons made of human bone and, at the last session, the initiates wear these themselves.

By the end of the week, the initiates should know the series of mantras for the deities they will meditate upon daily. Some variation exists in the details of initiation. For determining the most suitable deities, the initiates toss a flower into a maṇḍala. Where it falls indicates the person's fitting deity. At any time during this period, and sometimes in their regular meditations, initiates may become possessed by the deities, at which times they shake and tremble: this is regarded as a sign of progress in practice. The guruju must be available to advise his initiates after such events, or if they have other difficulties.

At present there is an association of Urāy and Vajrācārya couples

who have been initiated. This group, called the "Mahāsamvara Smartha Samāḥ," holds a week-long gathering every few years during which secret rituals are carried out, dances performed, and sermons on Vajrayana philosophy presented. For this retreat, the group eats and sleeps at the Akasha Joginī temple complex, northwest of Kathmandu.

Once taken, the Dekka meditation must be done every day for the rest of a person's life. Done alone and before eating, the hour-long meditation with visualizations and cycles of silent mantra repetitions takes up a regular portion of every morning of every day.<sup>1</sup> Initiates speak of the ideal of attaining ekacitta ("one-pointedness of mind") and of the difficulties encountered when practicing the meditations well. The fruits of Dekka practice are cultivating the faculty of prajñā, "insight" into the Buddhist analysis of life and attachment, strengthening one's vital breath (sās), removing bad karma (pāp), and attaining a good rebirth. Initiates are also said to be immune to harm by evil spirits.

The rules given for the practice of Dekka meditation must be strictly observed. It must be done daily as prescribed and one must speak about it to no one, "not even to one's sons" or else, as one informant told me, "one will go crazy and be reborn in hell." Stories of individuals breaking the rules and their ensuing disasters are part of the oral lore of Newar tradition.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>I suspect that the nineteenth century text translated by Brough (1948b: 671) describes one form of daily Dekka practice.

<sup>2</sup>One example will suffice: A beautiful young bride recently brought into her husband's family was coerced into taking the Dekka initiation with the rest of the family. After several months, she began to skip her daily meditation practice, disregarding the guruju's warning. The family noticed she was acting strange and rarely leaving

Taking Dekka entitles one to have darshan of the family āgam dya and makes males eligible for the kila yāye rites performed after his death. In this ritual, the guruju summons the dead one's vijñāna ("consciousness"), revives his prāṇā ("life force"), and instructs him through these faculties on finding the path to a good rebirth. Several interested but non-initiated Tuladhars described Dekka as training for the after-death confrontation with śūnyatā (cf. Tucci 1973: 6); others linked Dekka as a requirement for rebirth in Sukhāvātī (cf. Tucci 1948-51: 194ff).

For males --but not females-- the cremation procession will also be different, with the body transported to the burning ghat and then cremated in a seated position. For all who have Dekka, the ghat rituals will be different and longer than for non-initiates. Likewise, the shrāddha rites for the Dekka initiate are also more elaborate. The family must preserve the ashes and carry them to pilgrimage centers around and outside the Kathmandu Valley: Jamacho, Manichuda, Namo Buddha, and Si pu Cho.

At present, less than 10% of the Uray have taken the Dekka, a great decline, say informants, from a time fifty years ago when a majority practiced this meditation in the last phase of their lives.

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her room, but attributed it to the usual adjustment problems of a new bride. Soon thereafter, a sister of the house was horrified to find the girl standing on the edge of the rooftop. Shrieking, she jumped and fell five stories. She survived the fall, but crippled and disfigured. It was then understood that it was her failure to do the meditation that led to her temporary madness.

The difficulty of understanding, the time required, the expense, and the poor quality of the guruju's instructions were given as reasons why some contemporary Tuladhars did not want Dekka.

Dekka is clearly the culmination of a Newar Buddhist's religious evolution. He progresses from simple puja and contact with the Vajrācārya rituals to personal involvement in nikhan and bratas of various kinds. As mentioned previously, taking Dekka completes a Tuladhar's introduction into the Newar Vajrayāna tradition. This is true on many levels: physically (giving access to the āgam dya of his own lineage), ritually, philosophically, and soteriologically. Without Dekka, a Tuladhar is cut off from achieving a full intellectual awareness of the traditions surrounding him. The fact that Dekka is still a living tradition for so few among the Urāy is striking evidence of the declining spiral of Vajrayāna practice and plausibility in Asan.

#### Recently Imported Meditative Traditions

As we discuss at length in Chapter IX, the Theravada traditions, introduced from Sri Lanka and Burma, and the Tibetan lamaist groups, who have settled in Kathmandu since 1959, are both growing cultural movements in Nepal.

The Lamaist traditions and practices do not differ very much -- in essentials -- from the Vajrayāna practices in the Newar Bahā Buddhism. Lamas periodically give initiations for different deities (usually starting with Avalokiteśvara) and these are open to interested Newars. They also sponsor short-term meditation retreats, the most common being Nyunge, a seven day period of fasting,

meditation, and devotional exercises (Ortner 1978). The lamas' openness, the quality of their teaching, and the small expense involved have been factors leading to a considerable Urāy following.

The Theravadins have been very active in teaching vipassanā meditation as part of their missionizing efforts among the Urāy. They have invited masters from abroad to teach this type of meditation and these programs elicit a widespread following. According to my surveys, more than 20% of the Urāy families have one member practicing this meditation regularly.

Other modern teachers such as Rajneesh, Sivapuribaba, Sai Baba, and Muktānanda have attracted disciples among the Tuladhars. Gohenko, a Bombay householder who prescribes vipassanā meditation and teaches Theravadin doctrine, drew over a hundred Urāy on a week-long retreat in the Valley in 1982. Thus, the Tuladhars have actively embraced the meditation practices taught by these newly influential Indian gurus, just as they have retreated from taking Dekka.

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### BRATAS

Bratas (Skt: vrata) are special forms of priest-led, lay-sponsored worship that focus devotional attention toward an individual deity. Individuals, usually as part of a group, devote one or more days to making offerings, while abstaining from certain foods. Often, a vow is made to the deity in hopes of a specific boon. Bratas are another example of a religious practice adapted into the Newar

Buddhist tradition with origins in the Indian tradition.<sup>1</sup>

Although bratas are open to all laymen, nowadays women are by far in the majority. Tradition specifies a series of boons for each type of brata and all are supposed to be very beneficial for one's stock of punya. That bratas date back many centuries in the Newar tradition is attested to by the antiquity of manuscripts describing the proper forms of observance (Malla 1981). This genre of printed text is also one of the most common in Kathmandu.

In the bratas, we find a standard order in worshipping the Buddhist TriRatna (Buddha, Sangha, Dharma) as part of the ritual format. Here again, the classical norms of Buddhist hierarchy are applied to these popular devotional exercises prescribed for laymen. We will treat the most common brata, Dalan Danegu, in detail and mention other popular bratas in passing. According to recent Newar pūjā manuals, there are texts specifying bratas for every deity and a brata ritual program for every special religious occasion, if laymen desire one (Vajrācārya 1981: 135). Further research should document the entire brata tradition still practiced among the Urāy.

#### Dalan Danegu or Aṣṭamī Brata

By far the most popular of the Buddhist bratas, Dalan Danegu, as its second name suggests, must be done on one of the two aṣṭamī days, i.e. the eighth day of either lunar fortnight (Wilson 1828: 473). The

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<sup>1</sup>Bratas are still an important part of modern Hinduism (Babb 1978).

deity is one of the forms of Avalokiteśvara, popularly called "Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara" or "Karunamaya." Groups may be organized to perform the brata once, or monthly for one or more years. The traditional day to start this type of brata series is mukha: aṣṭamī<sup>1</sup>, in the fall. Organizers for these longer programs will pay the Vajrācāryas for their services and arrange for the main pūjās. In taking on this considerable task, they usually have a specific religious goal in mind. The group may do the brata in one place, travel to different Avalokiteśvara temples in the Valley, or choose other landmarks in the religious geography. (Jana Bahā is a popular choice, as might be expected.) In whatever context, an individual usually performs the brata for himself, although a woman may sometimes also perform the brata for her husband, making two sets of offerings.

The lay devotees must fast on the day of the rituals and eat only one meal afterwards consisting solely of rice, dal, and yogurt. Beforehand they should bathe and come wearing clean clothes. Each must bring a pūjā plate containing all of his offerings for the day.

Priestly preliminaries begin by midday with the guru maṇḍala pūjā and a Kalash pūjā to Amoghapāśa. A pūjā to the lokapālas of the area rounds out the beginning rites.

Usually a group of Vajrācāryas directs the laymen who sit in a large circle. Rituals begin with all performing the guru maṇḍala pūjā. This establishes their acceptance of the Vajrācārya as guru; the latter affirms this by touching each with his vajra and keys.

The ritual sequence then turns to worshipping four different

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<sup>1</sup>According to the Newar Buddhists, this is the day when the image of Akshobhya Buddha is placed on top of the linga at Paśupati.



maṇḍalas that are usually made in front of each person on a red cloth. A Vajrācārya assistant will make the maṇḍala with fine white sand using a special mold that is skillfully handled. The first maṇḍala worshipped is the Buddha maṇḍala which positions the four Directional Buddhas and their consorts, with Vairocana at the center. The guruju directs the laymen to make standard pancopacāra offerings to the appropriate location on the maṇḍala for each and chants verses of praise at each juncture. Though the ritual calls for an explanation (upadesa) of each maṇḍala, I never saw this done. To complete the worship of the Buddha maṇḍala, the Vajrācārya leads them in reciting a stanza of taking refuge in the Buddhas. This is a mechanical act, as the language is archaic Newari.

Worship of the Dharma maṇḍala follows the same format, concluding in taking refuge. In this maṇḍala are the Nava Dharma, the so-called nine canonical texts of the Newar Buddhist tradition.

For the Sangha maṇḍala, laymen worship nine Bodhisattvas, with "Arya Avalokiteśvara" at the center. Refuge is taken in the "Sangha of Bodhisattvas".

The final maṇḍala pūjā is to Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara. The ritual is clearly constructed as a meditative exercise including:

- + Meditating on the catur brahmavihāras (maitrī, karunā, muditā, and upekṣā), the limitless realms which are to be projected outward;
- + A meditation on the śūnya quality of all phenomenal reality (Om Svabhāvasūddha Sarvadharmā Svabhāva śuddhoham, "Om. I and all Dharmas are pure and free of own-being."
- + Visualization meditation on Amoghapasa with the instructions: "meditate on the letter paṃ residing in your heart, the 1000 petaled lotus above the rays of which is the circle of the moon; above that, visualize "hrim"; above that is the one called Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara."

For all contemporary laymen, the "meditation" is simply the recitation of the Sanskrit verses of instruction which are left meaningless to them.

Chanting mantras and gesturing with mudrās, the Vajrācārya summons Avalokiteśvara into the kalash and to dwell in the maṇḍala before each devotee. He directs all in making offerings to the maṇḍala guardians. He then unwinds a white ball of thread from the top of the kalash so that each participant is joined in a circle. After each touches it twenty-one times, the thread (called a "Dharma garment") along with a cycle of pancopacāra offerings, and finally the mandala itself are offered to Amoghapāśa. While the laymen continue holding the thread, the guruju tells the story of Aṣṭamī Brata describing its origin, purpose, and benefits in a 10 minute recitation.

The brata concludes when the guruju rewinds the string, dismisses the maṇḍala deities, and releases all other deities associated with the kalash pūjā. The string is broken and each participant is given a piece that will be worn around his neck. At this time, each layman comes to the guruju to get prasād from the Kalash pūjā and to give dakṣiṇā.

If just one brata is done, each person must eat only the simple foods prescribed and nothing else until noon the next day when a guru maṇḍala pūjā and a pūjā of release from the brata vows are done. If it is part of a series, these concluding rituals will be done only at

the end of the cycle.<sup>1</sup>

### Basundhāra Brata or Tila Brata

This brata is most commonly observed on a regular basis in families with a guṭhi to underwrite the expenses. One time of the year is designated as best for performing this two day brata: the dark thirteenth day of Bhadra.

Newar Buddhists regard Basundhāra (Sanskrit= Vasundhāra) as a goddess of fertility and prosperity.<sup>2</sup> If pleased, she can sustain the family's wealth and the vitality of the lineage. Given these benefits, it is understandable that most Tuladhars in my sample have done the Basundhāra brata at least once in their lives. Many do it yearly.

As with Dalan Danegu, a Vajracarya must lead the family through the pujas that start in the afternoon, with the family on fast. Because gold is the goddess' favorite color, all of the puja accessories, including the ritual thread, and the women's shawls are made with material of this color. The ritual order follows the structure outlined for Dalan Danegu: guru maṇḍala, Kalash pūjā to the deity, then worship of the TriRatna maṇḍalas followed by the

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<sup>1</sup>The Uposatha brata is identical to Dalan Danegu in general format, but may be done on any day. It is different only in its inclusion of a confession of sins to Avalokitesvara as part of the ritual. This now rarely done brata seems to be related to the Uposadha of the bhikṣu saṅgha, a fortnightly custom practiced in Indian Buddhism (Dutt 1962: 25).

<sup>2</sup>In a recent printed text, Kumārī, Laksmī, and Basundhāra are all said to be forms (rūpa) of the goddess Prithivī (Vajrācārya 1981: 81).

Basundhāra maṇḍala. The guruju likewise tells the story of the brata, etc. .

On the second day, all of the offering materials are gathered together, resanctified by the guruju, then carried to the riverside and dumped. A large feast is held for the family afterwards.

### Tārā Dharma

A variant on the standard order of the Newar brata is found in the worship of Tārā, the popular goddess of the Northern Buddhist tradition (Beyer 1973).

The pūjā done is the sattu pūjā, described above. A green thread links all the devotees as the guruju reads the story of the mericiful goddess.

Tārā brata should be done at least once in a lifetime, according to the Newar tradition as performing the brata can avert a premature death. For this reason, the brata is often performed in the name of a person who is seriously ill. The Tara temple in Itum Bahā and the tīrtha to Tārā on Sipu Cho Mountain are the most popular places for performing this brata nowadays.

### Purnimā Brata or DharmaDhatu Brata

This brata is done to worhsip Svayambhū as this was the favorite brata of the stupa's mythological founder. The proper moment for this observance is relatively rare: it should be done on the conjunction of a full moon and saṅlhū, the start of a new solar month. The form of the brata is essentially the same as the dalan danegu. Performing Purnimā Brata is thought to be especially effective at awakening the

desire for reaching complete enlightenment (Vajrācārya 1981: 84).

### Caturdaśī Brata

This brata to Mahānkāl follows the same pattern as those already described. As its name implies, it should be done on caturdasi, the day before the new moon.

### Satya Nārāyan Brata

This brata to the god Vishnu is done on ekādaśī, the eleventh day of the lunar fortnight. The ritual specialist is a Brahman. Though the requirement of fasting and purification is the same in the Buddhist brata, the ritual is simpler and seemingly a straightforward exoteric series of offerings to a Vishnu image placed in a small ratha located in the midst of the devotees. The Brahman also tells stories about Vishnu.

Though this is a main component of Newar Hindu practice, Tuladhars still perform it in significant numbers. According to my surveys, about 35% of Tuladhar families have a member who once did Satya Nārāyan Brata.

The reason commonly given for doing this brata it is the boon of securing good fortune in worldly matters such as finding a good husband, having a male child, and business prosperity. Tuladhars did not express embarrassment in their participation in a ritual guided by a Brahman priest. This willingness to do so exemplifies the extent to which Tuladhars feel free to utilize the extraordinarily broad spectrum of religious options in the urban setting. This situation also points to the limited utility of using "Hindu" or "Buddhist"



Plate 63: A Large Group Doing Dalan Danegu

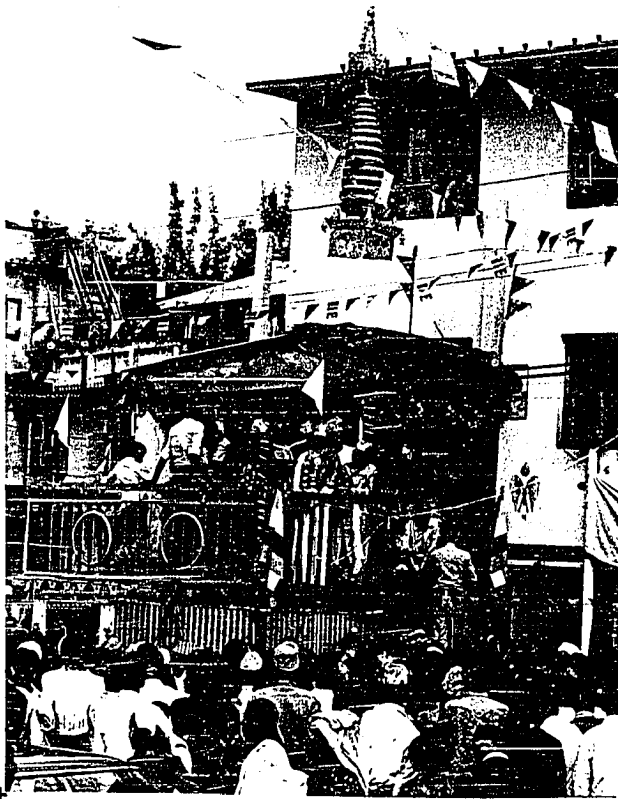


Plate 64: A Large Pañca  
Dān Assembly, 1982

labels as analytical tools to help in understanding Newar religious life. To worship Vishnu for worldly boons is not a "syncretic action", as some observers have claimed; it is consistent with the norms of ancient Buddhist orthodoxy which allow laymen the choice of worshipping all gods for their worldly betterment.

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#### OTHER EXTRAORDINARY PŪJĀ PROGRAMS

Newar tradition also includes large lay-sponsored programs of puja and devotionism. We mention them in order of increasing size and the expense involved. These programs can be sponsored by one family or groups united for the purpose. Once organized, the sponsors usually invite all interested devotees to join.

##### Bahā Pūjā

Accompanied by musicians (the Panca Tal Bājan) and Vajrācārya priests invited to lead the pūjās, a large group of devotees makes a large pradakṣiṇā of the city making offerings in every bahā as they go. This arduous day-long outing must start at Svayambhū where an expanded kalash pūjā is offered to the stupa and another pūjā (kala pūjā) is done at Santipur. This practice has declined greatly in recent years: only two groups did Bahā Pūjā in 1981-82.

##### Tīrtha Jātrā

In groups organized on similiar lines to Bahā Pūjā groups, devotees visit watercourse tīrthas according to standard programs at specified times and places. These may be joined in association with

major festivals such as Mohini and Saunti, when for five days many people do śrāddha pūjās (see Chapter VI), or according to ad hoc design.

### Pīṭha Pūjā

Usually restricted to upper caste (i.e. nikhan - eligible) Buddhist groups and led by a Vajracarya teacher, pīṭha pūjā usually entails several months of outings to the three circles of twenty-four aṣṭamātrkā shrines arranged around Kathmandu town (Gutschow 1977).<sup>1</sup> As Gutschow points out, this program has an exoteric level -- worshipping at the physical shrines-- along with an esoteric overlay that identifies the three circles of pīṭhas with the three cakras in the adepts visualized body. For those with the Dekka initiation, "his pilgrimage makes him realize how the world he inhabits, the world characterized by Newar culture, is mirrored in his own body (Ibid.: 9). Pīṭha pūjā thus explicitly connects the individual level of Newar religious practice with the sacred geography of the Kathmandu Valley, as we discussed in Chapter III.

### Sava Lākh Pūjā

A layman can make a vow to offer 100,000 (lākh) of seven (sava) different offerings at a given shrine and may include 100,000 pradakṣiṇās of it as well. The process of making the offerings-- deva lamps, bowls of water, tormas, incense sticks, and kisli (rice-filled bowls with a coin and betal nut) entails considerable expense and time

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<sup>1</sup>We mapped these shrines in Chapter III.



to complete. When finished, a special sahasra pūjā must be done.

### Pañca Dān

Usually done during the specially designated day in Gunla month (See Chapter VII), a layman may invite all of the Vajracaryas in the Kathmandu Valley to receive his dāna donations. When done on the greatest scale, the sponsor invites the caretakers at Svayambhu to bring their moveable image (Amitabha Buddha) to be installed as a "witness" to the proceedings. In addition to the usual food grain offerings, he must also make large scale gifts to chosen Vajracaryas in the form of land, a house, special ornaments, and money.<sup>1</sup>

To perform Pañca Dān in 1981 entailed about Rs. 100,000 in expenses. Joining the prime donor, any layman may come to participate in the line and make donations.

### Samyak

As we mentioned in Chapter IV, guthis in the high Buddhist castes of Kathmandu organize this most elaborated Newar festival once every twelve years. If a layman wishes to sponsor a Samyak on his own he may do so, at considerable expense. (This was estimated to be Rs. 300,000 in 1980.) This is not the place to get into the numerous details of this highly elaborate and important festival event. In outline, there

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<sup>1</sup>In modern times, the basis of selection has not been learning or meditation; instead it is whoever is first in line at the patron's house on the Pañca Dān day. The rather meaningless criterion and the spectacle of Vajrācāryas staying in place for days before, scrambling for first place in the queue is a good example of the curiously contorted state of patronage between Newar laymen and Vajrācāryas in modern Newar Buddhist society.

are three days of processions by all Samyak image holders, led by the moveable Svayambhū image and accompanied by most every major Buddhist deity in the Kathmandu Valley. After spending the first evening outside the old royal palace in town, all deities then proceed on day two to a field at the foot of Svayambhū hill where the sponsor must arrange to feed every Sakya and Vajrācārya in the Kathmandu Valley. The King is also invited to attend at the time of this offering. On the final day, all women are invited to receive the same feast offerings and after the Svayambhū image is returned to the hilltop, the moveable image of Harati Ajimā is brought down to receive a brief series of offerings.

In addition to the dāna, a sponsor must have special images made which are used in the processions to the royal palace and Svayambhū. The chief among these is an eight foot high image of Dipankara Buddha (called Samyak Dya) which must be constructed so a man can walk inside. Other items include a small bronze chaitya, two banners, and a ceremonial umbrella.

To sponsor a Samyak is the single most prestigious dāna a Newar Buddhist patron can make. Doing so entitles him to add "Samyak" to his own name, display the images during Gunla, and have his family join in the impressive processions of all future Samyaks. Although over fifteen families have done so over the last century, no Newar layman has come forward since 1953.

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This vast repertoire of ritual performance shows the extent to which Newars adopted and maintained traditions from Indian Buddhist civilization. Nowhere else in the Himalayas outside of Tibet has so much been preserved. For the Tuladhars, there are a great many choices available for organizing life around religious observances. In the following chapter, we survey how events in an Uṛāy lifetime are structured around pūjās and other religious observances.

CHAPTER VI  
Ritual in the Newar Lay Buddhist Community II:  
The Tuladhar Life Cycle-Rites and Passages

One of the great classics of modern Newari poetry, Sugat Saurabh, is an account of Shakyamuni Buddha's life by Chittadhar Hridaya (1906-1982), a Naradevi Tuladhar. In it, Hridaya eloquently composes the Buddha's biography as if he were a Newar completing the life cycle rituals that a Tuladhar would.<sup>1</sup> This work reflects the heritage of the Newari-Sanskrit literary tradition which depicts Shakyamuni Buddha himself and in previous births as a householder who participated in the ritual customs appropriate to his social status. For the Tuladhars it is thus natural that rites of passage are incorporated into their ongoing life.

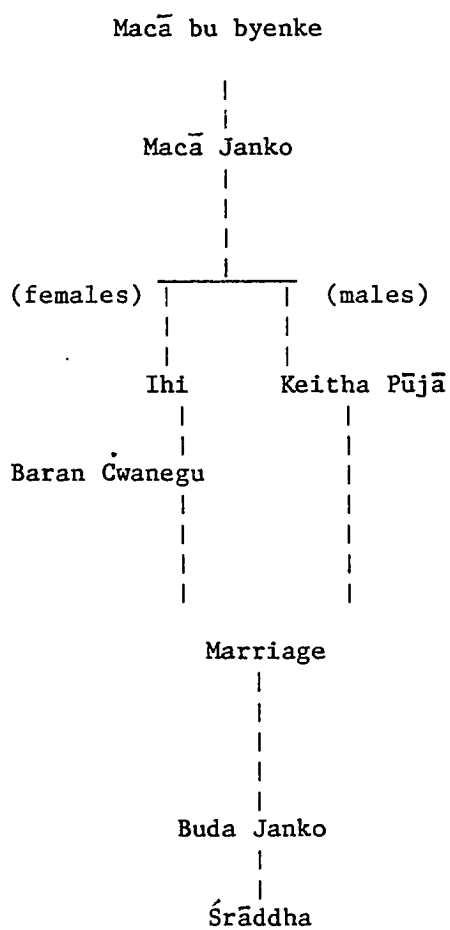
The Newar Buddhist samskaras closely follow the classical paradigms of Indian tradition (Pandey 1949), marking the key points in a person's life with rituals that remove forces that threaten his passage, empower him, while eliminating any incurred pollution. As we have noted in other contexts, the Newars have combined many strands of Indian culture with their own for the last fifteen centuries so that there are continuities and divergences from the classic ideals. In this chapter, we will follow the course of a lifetime through the divisions marked by the Tuladhar community.

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<sup>1</sup>Subarna Tuladhar and I have finished the first draft translation of this work.

Figure VI-1: Newar Lay Buddhist Samskaras



## 1. CONCEPTION

In Newar society, sons are especially desired to sustain family enterprises and maintain the rituals for departed ancestors. Male children stay as permanent productive members of the family, bringing in brides who contribute their productive labor to the household. Through the reproductive union, a brother with sons guarantees his standing in relation to his siblings; so he also establishes his wife as a mother among other brothers' wives.

Many ritual traditions to ensure male children have been elaborated: observing the aṣṭamī brata to Amoghapasa Avalokiteśvara with a vow to this purpose; dya ulegu, making 100,000 pradakṣiṇās of a Buddhist shrine (Svayambhū, Si ga:, Jana Bahā Avalokiteśvara) with this intention; pujas to Ganesh with laddu sweets or kaygu la:, an offering of 100,000 peas; and, finally, by the hopeful mother making an offering of water to a Siva linga shrine. Ayurvedic medicine is also prescribed for this purpose.

Despite the preference for male children, it should also be noted that girls are also desired in Tuladhar families. Many informants said that a mix of children is the ideal, for without girls the fullest cultural/social lifestyle cannot be observed in the household. The long life of brothers is also linked to a yearly protective ritual (kijā pūjā) performed for them by their older sisters during Saunti. For this reason, a first-born girl child is welcomed. Traditional lore specifies making cut ginger (sisi pālu) offerings to Ganesh for the birth of a girl.

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## 2. BIRTH

All Tuladhar mothers in Asan now give birth in a hospital so that the role of the traditional midwife, the Dirī Aji, has contracted to a formality in the after-birth rituals. Tuladhars also need not call the butcher (Nay) who once had to cut the umbilical cord.

The exact moment of birth is defined by when the umbilical cord is cut. Recording the exact moment of this act and other practices associated with the mother's ritual confinement have been abandoned in Tuladhar society.<sup>1</sup>

Though the birth is no longer in the father's home, it is still managed by the father's kin. They must inform the mother's family immediately when the baby is born which is done by sending a specific offering: whole betel nuts if the child is male, halved betel if female. Once the mother recovers sufficiently, she must return to the father's house for the first month.

Even with modern birthing, several older traditions are still adhered to. The umbilical cord, pi, is saved in a clay bowl (dhau bega:). Once it is taken to the local cwasa, the phuki enters into a state of birth pollution called ja bili kenegu which will endure until the byenke rites are performed. Most families still save a small piece of the pi and dry it for use as part of a protective cloth-enclosed yantra. This amulet, which a guruju makes, is hung from the baby's neck.

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<sup>1</sup> These customs still survive in the farmer communities of the Kathmandu Valley.

### 3. MACA BU BYENKE

After births and deaths in their group, the phuki members may make no offerings to the gods and they do not entertain any guests nor dine among outsiders. To end this condition, they must perform rituals to remove the state of pollution.<sup>1</sup>

Byenke may be performed on the fourth, sixth, or twelfth day after birth. Because of the inconvenience of the pollution restrictions, the family usually desires the earliest possible date.

As preparation for the rite (and as we will see often in this chapter), the house is swept and purified with pure water (ni la:), an activity called "nisi yāye". All family members must purify themselves by bathing and having their nails cut by the barber.<sup>2</sup> On the day of the ritual, mother and father must fast in preparation for the pūjās.

Daughters of the family who have been married off, the mhāy macā, return to their natal homes for this day. Although they are no longer subject to pollution from this household, they do come to help with the preparations and to share the feast.

In the morning, the baby is taken outside for the first time, bathed, and "shown the sun."<sup>3</sup> Before the ritual begins, all phuki members are given a leaf plate with small amounts of ginger, salt, molasses, ima (a medicinal herb, lingusticum ajowan), beaten rice, yogurt, and ṭikā powder; after applying the ṭikā, the foods are to be

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<sup>1</sup>"Byenke" means "release", i.e. from birth pollution.

<sup>2</sup>The former practice of the male phuki members shaving their heads as part of byenke is no longer observed.

<sup>3</sup>This was once a separate ritual performed by the family guruju (B. Vajrācārya 1963).



eaten to end the pollution period. (These same substances are used to end the death pollution period.)

The ritual itself is simple and is done by the Diri Aji. (The family guruju is not called, though some informants say that Vajrācāryas once did this pūjā and a kalash pūjā, the water from the latter being used for the child's first bath. After she makes simple offerings to the sukunda lamp, the Aji arranges leaf plates of both the mother's and father's families, and to the local cwasa ajimā shrine. Small leaf plates with edibles are also prepared and loaded onto a winnowing tray (haṣa). The Diri Aji touches the tray to the baby's head (making the baby, in effect, honor the offering) and then carries it in enforced silence out to the street, where it must be given to small children. She later will carry a large feast plate to the cwasa in a special wicker container (kala).

With these offerings, from this day until the next major rite, Janko, the baby is entrusted to Cwasa Ajima. This goddess is thought to be a protectoress who is always physically present with the child during this period. If the child has any prolonged sickness or emotional disturbance, offerings will be sent to the cwasa for this Ajimā. Most families are careful to see that the simple rituals described here are done in the proper form for if they are done poorly, troubles may befall mother and child. If some mishap occurs in making the offerings, they will be repeated in their entirety.

Once these offerings are made, the father of the child sits at the head of a line next to the mother, who holds the baby. The rest of the men of the phuki also sit in line, from oldest to youngest. The senior-most women of the house present the line with dhau sagan.

After this, each male rises and rubs a little mustard oil on the baby's head--on the luku ga:, the "soft spot." Each also places five grains of uncooked rice there. They may also present gifts of clothing or toys.

A female representative of the mother's family gives Dhau sagan next. After this, the child's Paju (mother's brother) gives a gift of clothing and a silver ring. He also brings a large array of foodstuffs and a bed, with accessories, for the baby. Finally, the Paju also gives many toys to the baby. These gifts are the beginning of a relationship that will be have social importance throughout both individuals' lives.

After this, the Diri Aji takes the baby from the mother and gives it to the father. According to tradition, this is the first time that he should touch the child and by accepting it, he admits it into the lineage. The father puts a rupee coin on the child's forehead; after he does so, all males of the phuki follow suit. The Aji, seated nearby, takes each coin as one form of payment for her services. The event is a very happy one as each person tries to make the baby laugh. Newars love their children, and nowhere is this clearer than in their reactions to the child's responses.<sup>1</sup>

After another Dhau sagan from the father's family, a small meal is served to break the day's fast. Later, the Aji will make the first lampblack, aja, which will be applied around the baby's eyes to protect it from harsh sunlight and from evil spirits. After the rite is completed, it is ju for the baby to wear clothes.

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<sup>1</sup>Popular belief is that a baby's spontaneous laughter is his recalling his previous life.



Plate 65: Macā Bu Byenke: Aji Preparing the Pūjā to Ajimā



Plate 66: Macā Janko: A Plate for "Choosing Baby's Career"

In the evening, the family holds a feast to celebrate the birth and mark the family's return to commensual relations with relatives and friends.

One additional folk belief must be mentioned: if the day's events run late, Tuladhars say that it is because the celestial Bodhisattva Manjuśri's two wives, Kesini and Upakesini were invited to the day's ceremonies and had to come from the mountains Pul Cho and Dilla Cho respectively. Because of the distance, they are often late and this holds up the day's activities.

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#### 4. AFTER BYENKE

For the first month after birth, the mother and child stay in the father's home. The mother's family commonly sends a servant to help with the extra work mother and baby require. They may also hire a masseuse to give their daughter a daily mustard oil massage to help speed her recovery. Informal visits by her kin are common from birth onward. The mother should eat certain foods- yogurt, sweets, molasses- and abstain from others such as fish, eggs, and salt so that her milk will come and she will heal.<sup>1</sup>

After a month, she will return to her natal home for an extended stay of one to two months. Before coming to fetch the mother, her family comes en masse to pay a formal visit and bring a feast with them. This visit is called macā bu bicā.

When her family finally escorts her home, they must do so in a

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<sup>1</sup>Ayurvedic medicines are also available for many of the problems encountered after childbirth.

procession, throwing chauki, broken rice, a favorite food of spirits, at all crossroads to insure that none follow the mother and harm the child. Once the mother is in her own home, it is usually easier for her to care for the small baby. This is a good example of the supportive role that the twā cheñ, "own house," plays in a woman's life.

To set the date for the mother's return to their household, the husband and males of the phuki pay a visit to her called dakṣiṇā cha wanegu. At this time, they make money gifts to the child which the mother keeps.

Tuladhars still use aja for the eyes, append yantra charms around their babies' necks<sup>1</sup>, and readily make offerings to Ajima when the cause of sickness is unclear. There is an immense lore in the folk tradition on the care of babies and their maladies which is much too large to enter into here. However, one custom must be reported that bears on our treatment of Buddhist tradition: it is believed that newborns should not be kept together with other newborns. The reason is that they will talk about their previous lives.

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## 5. MACĀ JANKO

Macā Janko combines the first rice feeding and name-giving saṃskāras (Toffin 1975: 47) and is done for male babies at six months of age and for females at eight months. After the house has been

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<sup>1</sup>The most commonly requested yantra has both the Navagraha ("Nine Planets") and Aṣṭamātrkāś ("Eight Mother Goddesses") (Vajrācārya (1963: 4)).

purified and with the phuki members on fast, the family's Vajrācārya priest leads the family's eldest male (thākali, used hereafter) through the start of a kalash pūjā to Mamiki. Before the "Worship of the evoked deity" portion of the pūjā begins (as described in Chapter IV), the female thākali leads in the presentation of a las khus to mother and child.

Once they are seated to the left of the guruju, the mother is led through a guru maṇḍala pūjā. The male thākali then places a tray of items consecrated with mantras earlier in the puja before the child: pen, book, paddy grains, money, clay, brick, and necklace. With the thākali holding the tray, the mother urges the child to take something ("ka !", "ka !"). The child eventually grabs at one and on this basis his future occupation is predicted. (None of my informants expressed real belief in this as serious prognostication.)

The thākali then presents a first set of clothes to the baby, and these are put on it immediately. Among the items of apparel, a distinctive Janko necklace is essential.<sup>1</sup> He then takes the guruju's vajra, touches the baby between the child's eyes, and formally utters the child's astrologically given name.<sup>2</sup> He may then present ankle bracelets and other ornaments.

Next the Diri Aji takes the baby's (by now) worn infant blanket to the mother; the latter then secretes a drop of her breast milk on

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<sup>1</sup>This necklace incorporates offerings to the Nava Graha (Vajrācārya 1963: 6).

<sup>2</sup>This was reached after consulting with the family Joshi, as part of drawing up the child's horoscope, the Jata. Proper Urāy names show their caste's thoroughgoing Buddhist identity: they should include one of the Tri Ratna (i.e. Buddha, Dharma, Saṅgha) and/or end with one of the affixes muni, ananda, or jnana.

it. The Aji then takes this blanket, broken rice, and straw to the cwasa. This marks the child's release from the goddess Ajimā's protective power.

At the exact auspicious time (seit) specified by the astrologer, the rice feeding is done by the thākali. While the guruju chants, he uses a gold coin to lift a bit of food from a plate often loaded with over 100 different foods. He makes five different presentations of food to the child's mouth.<sup>1</sup>

The last ritual sequence is a maṇḍala-centered Kumārī Pūjā for the initiated family members only: i.e. only those who have taken Nikhan. A Vajrācārya woman, most often the guruju's wife, must come to assist. At the conclusion, all do a khus pūjā and get samāy prasād.

That evening, the family will hold a feast to which over two hundred people may be invited. For this and the day's activities, the mhāy macā return home. The mother's family is also invited to the feasting. Many household groups of family and friends present sagan to the host family.

The next morning, a final postscript ritual is performed called kothu pwā cwākegu ("opening the throat"). The father's sister (nini), assisted by the Dirī Aji, takes the child to the family Ganesh temple. They make a standard round of offerings to Ganesh loaded with extra laḍḍu sweets and lead the child in his "worshipping" the god. They

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<sup>1</sup>According to one informant, these are for the five prāṇās ("life forces").

<sup>2</sup>Vajracarya puja guides list a now defunct puja called Dharma danegu, in which the father must touch a winnowing tray to the child's mouth and throw it in the courtyard Luku Mahādyā hole nearby (Vajrācārya 1963: 6).

return with prasād shared by all in the household and receive both Dhau Sagan and Khe Sagan.

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## 6. EDUCATION

Up to the late Rana Period, Tuladhar males were educated mainly in the family setting. For most this meant acquiring the arithmetic skills and literacy necessary to manage the family business. As part of a young man's "training for the world", he was often sent to a Brahman pundit who specialized in teaching the Amarakos, a text from the Indian tradition that uses many stories to teach "the wisdom of the world."

In generations past, Vajracarya pandits seem to have done some of this type of educating, but only rarely do so nowadays. There are several examples from the wealthiest Tuladhar families of Vajracaryas being regular fixtures in the family's daily life. They would instruct the children and often tell popular Buddhist stories. There are also several old Tuladhars whose fathers would sit with the family and talk about "Dharma" with their gurus. This was a very rare but still occasionally encountered event during my fieldwork.

In contemporary Asan, over 80 % of all children attend school to the 8th class level. Obviously, educational opportunities for women represent one major change in Tuladhar society. There is also a high value placed on educational achievement, though one now sees the familiar tensions between the demands of advanced degrees and the needs of the family business. The command of other languages--English, Hindi, and Nepali (in order of regard)-- is one of the most



prestigious achievements. Tuladhars have studied abroad and reached international job markets in considerable numbers.

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## 7. KEITHA PŪJĀ

This samskāra is to be done by boys from 7 years old to twelve years. Urāy differ from the Vajrācārya and Sakya castes in following this custom.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the Jyāpus, who do keitha pūjā at their Digu Dya shrines, Tuladhars perform it inside their homes.

After the boy is welcomed with las khus into the room where the pūjā is to be held, he is led through the guru maṇḍala pūjā by the family priest as part of a kalash pūjā to Mamaki. Once the family barber and the boy's Pāju are ready, the boy is led to a corner of the room. Afterwards, he must knock over a mortar and pestle enroute and then gives the barber a series of gifts (money, meat, oil, paddy) and sits on the floor. His Pāju takes scissors and makes the first few cuttings of his hair, which the boy's Nini (father's sister) catches. (She will later deposit the hair, mixed with other offerings, into the Vishnumati River.) The barber then finishes the job, shaving the skull with his razor and leaving a small tuft at the crown, the angsa; he also cuts the boy's nails. Once this purification is finished, the boy is led by his father to a room where he changes into a loincloth (keitha) and Indian dhoti.

On these are on, he returns to the guruju who paints a moon on his left shoulder and a swastika on his shaven head. He touches the

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<sup>1</sup>The latter perform bare cuyegu, a rite in which they enter the celibate bhiksu sangha and renounce it four days later (Locke 1975).

boy between the eyes with his vajra, chanting a mantra for his protection.

Mother and father step forward to give him the essentials for living in the forest: bow and arrow, food sack, deer skin, a staff. After arranging all of these items, the boy "departs." Up until the last decade, this meant that he would go out on the street and toward the Vishnumati river to the west of town; he would play a kind of game with his Pāju, trying to escape using various means--but still being apprehended and returning home. During my research period, all of these "departures" meant going to the rooftop for the rituals of welcome.

The Pāju responsible for the boy's return leads him to worship Ganesh to seal his pledge of returning to the householder's life. He also gives him money as part of the agreement. The boy must then make seven strides<sup>1</sup> on betel leaves, each with a betel nut and coin on top. His mother then gives him a container of rice before he returns to the pūjā room. Once he is seated at the head of the line with the other males of the lineage, relatives make offerings of garlands, Dhau sagan and Khe sagan, new clothes, and food. The father assists the guruju in finishing the kalash pūjā and all in the family come to get prasād and give dakṣiṇā. From this time onward, the boy is considered a full member of the Tuladhar caste and he must observe the customs pertaining to ritual purity.

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<sup>1</sup>This motif of seven strides, done here and by Buddhist deities in Newar festivals (e.g. Cakan Dya Jātrā, Chapter VII) may be related to Shākyamuni Buddha's birth stories where he makes seven strides after his birth. Though Keitha Pūjā occurs well into youth, the use of birth symbolism in life cycle rites is a common motif (Van Gennep 1960: 150; Eliade 1958: 51).

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Plate 67: Keitha Pūjā:  
Mother and Father  
Prepare for the Son's  
"Leaving Home"



Plate 68: Girls Sitting With Their Fathers for Ihi Pūjā

Keitha pūjā is done by both Hindu and Buddhist Newars, in common with most "twice-born" Hindu castes throughout the subcontinent. However, unlike the Hindu rite of sacred thread investiture, Upanayana, the Buddhists include no sacred thread.<sup>1</sup> Most Tuladhars regard this as a saṃskāra "having nothing to do with Buddhism," as one put it. Several, however, interpreted this rite as an imitation of Shakyamuni Buddha's leaving home.)

Keitha pūjā is a good example of the partial "Buddhist-ization" of a Hindu saṃskāra: it is done by a Buddhist priest who worships Buddhist deities, and employs the symbols of Buddhist protection. For the laymen, however, these transformed Buddhist aspects are not understood as most regard the ritual as merely an entrance to ritual adulthood, non-Buddhist and derivative from the Hindu tradition.

At the completion, a large family feast is held.

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## 8. IHI OR BYA BEWA

For both Hindu and Buddhist Newar girls, Ihi is a marriage which marks a girl's passage toward ritual adulthood. For the Tuladhars, their daughters must do Ihi and Baran Cwanegu as part of their "ritual finishing" which makes them marriageable adults. Now it is with this social progression in mind (and mindful of the social consequences for not doing so) that the Tuladhars support this tradition. The

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<sup>1</sup> However, once this saṃskāra is completed, only then is the youth eligible to do srāddha pūjā (see below) for his ancestors and for this he must wear a special sacred thread. In this light Keitha pūjā is, in fact, an investiture.

irrelevancy of ritual effectiveness to the Urāy is made clear by the fact that Tuladhars send their daughters to Ihi rituals conducted by Brahman purohits as well as Vajrācāryas. Both Buddhist and Hindu versions are fully acceptable even though, as we note below, the respective pūjās are very different.

Ihi saṃskāras are always organized on an ad hoc basis. Vajracarya and Brahman purohits may organize a ceremony and publicize it or, alternatively, Ihi rituals can be incorporated into a Buda Janko saṃskāra or else as an essential part of rituals that a family must do when establishing a new chaitya. Ihi pūjās can also be done on a family basis, but nowadays most prefer to avoid the considerable expense by joining larger groups.<sup>1</sup> Once a family has a daughter of the appropriate age (5-11), they will be alert to find out if there is an Ihi group that they can join.

For this discussion, we will describe a Vajrācārya-led Ihi at the time of a chaitya dedication and make some comparative observations regarding the Hindu rite in the discussion.

Day One. On the first day, the girls must bathe, fast, wear fine clothing and jewelry, and come to the site of the ritual with the prescribed supplies and a pūjā bowl. (Her mother usually comes to assist.)

After the organizers provide a las khus welcome, the girls sit in lines near the chaitya. They do a guru maṇḍala pūjā and then prepare the objects to be used in the central rites on the following day.

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<sup>1</sup>In 1980, the cost of the Vajrācārya ritualists was about Rs. 1,000.

They must first make an "Thi Necklace" out of a long piece of yellow thread. The girls stand and their mothers measure 21 circular lengths of thread according to their height. Once this is done and the thread tied, the Vajrācārya woman assistant (gurumā) provides them with ten different spices which they must wrap into leaf pieces and sew into the necklace.<sup>1</sup>

Once this is made, the Vajrācārya comes to each girl and performs siphon luiyegu three times; each child then makes a series of pancopacāra offerings to the chaitya. Once the Vajrācārya completes the pūjā and gives prasād to the girls, the mothers give them milk to break the day's fast.

Day Two. On the second day the girls must again bathe, fast, and wear finery. Either at home or at the ritual site, they must also have their nails pared by a barberess. (If done at home, the father's sister (Nini) should catch them and, as she did for her brother's son, deposit them in the Vishnumati River.)

After a las khus welcome, the girls make pancopacāra offerings and receive prasād as part of the Vajrācārya's Homa pūjā and a MahaBali pūjā for the chaitya dedication. The Vajrācārya then puts the yellow thread necklace around the girl's neck and fixes a paper on her head which has a kalash pot painted on it. The gurumā then applies vermillion powder to the girl's part.

After other offerings are conveyed to the homa pūjā, the girl's

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<sup>1</sup>Informants said that the twenty-one circles represent the twenty-one Taras and that the spices are medicines which protect the girls during their fasting.

father (or some other senior male of the family) comes to sit with her. The gurumā binds the girl's wrists with a short rope after placing a bya fruit (wood apple, aegle marmelos), betel leaf, a feast leaf, and a rupee note in her hands. The father then accompanies the daughter in a procession led by the sponsoring family that moves three times around the new chaitya.

Once they are seated again, the gurumā comes to pour pañca amṛta on the girl's hands. The Vajrācārya then takes the rupee note and then releases the rope that binds the wrists. All of the objects must fall into a special painted clay plate, the ihi salapa. The Vajrācārya then adds a small dab of khīr ("rice pudding") to the bya which has been flavored with five spices.<sup>1</sup> The girls should break their fast by eating a bit of this special food.

Once the girls give their final pūjā offerings and receive prasāda from the pūjās, they stay in line to accept gifts of rice and other presents from their own families, from others who also participated, and from outsiders who want to earn punya for making offerings. Once the girls return home, their families present them with sagan, new clothes, and other gifts. As might be expected, the family holds a large feast.

As is made clear in the placing of vermillion on the girl's part, something that a woman's husband will also do at her wedding, Ihi is clearly a marriage. The question then is "to whom?" The Hindu Ihi is a marriage to Vishnu, a fact spoken of explicitly by Brahman

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<sup>1</sup>Vajrācārya informants say that the khīr mixture with the five spices symbolizes bodhicitta and the Five Buddhas, respectively, a point we will return to below.

purohīts at the time the girl's hair parting is marked with vermillion. The Vajrācāryas also perform this gesture and use the same bya fruit, but the meaning has been transformed according to Buddhist principles. The paradigm for the Buddhist version may be found in the rites administered to Jana Bahā's Avalokiteśvara, among which Ihi is one.<sup>1</sup> According to Locke's account, when the bya fruit is presented, the pūjārī says the following:

Sunyata karunabhinnan bodhicitta svarupan tata Svahrdyastha vijaksaram nana Lokadhāpusphuritva akanisthabhuvanan Tatva Tasmātdakṛsya Strīphak cintayet.  
 ("Regard this as the form of bodhicitta in which there is no distinction between sunya and compassion. Consider the seed letter in your own heart flowering in the different lokadhātu and then proceeds up to the akanistha heaven. From there, attract it so that it disappears into the bya fruit (Locke 1980: 216)."

Later, the binding of the hands is identified with the "mudrā of the Tathagatas." (*ibid.*) The association of the bya with bodhicitta is also supported by the Vajracarya's dabbing the special khir on the bya since khir was given to Shakyamuni Buddha right before his realization of Samyak Sambodhi ("complete enlightenment"), according to the Newar tradition. Its five spices symbolizing the Pañca Buddhas would also fit with this imagery. With this background, we may interpret the Buddhist Ihi as a purification of the young girl and her becoming a kumārī, an undefiled female being who embodies prajñā and gives access to bodhicitta. This view is supported by the Uray practice of calling post-Ihi and pre-menarche girls to their homes to accept pūjā offerings as part of their kumārī pūjā. Thus, the "Kumārī complex" is a central institution in Newar culture, the famous kumārīs being the

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to Chapter VII for the full treatment of this festival.



most elaborated examples of widespread practice.

Although these mantras and symbolisms make the Vajrācārya's version of Ihi distinctly Buddhist, I could not find any recognition of this fact among the Tuladhars. (Several of the Vajrācārya pūjārīs in the pūjā described above also could not supply any philosophical commentary on Ihi's meaning.)

The second central theme in Ihi, kanya dān, is also important. The gift of a virgin girl is thought to be productive of great punya for the father. Newars do this during Ihi, in contrast to the Parbatiya Hindus who perform the rite during the wedding rites to the human husband. Several Tuladhar informants linked the kanya dān of Ihi to the Vessantara Jataka.<sup>1</sup>

As with the Tuladhar boy's keitha pūjā, Ihi is a rite of passage into ritual adulthood. Once this rite is done, the youth must observe the pollution and purity customs of the Tuladhar caste. Moreover, the girls may begin to wear saris.

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## 9. BARAN CWANEGU

The second major life cycle rite for Tuladhar girls is the Baran Cwanegu. This rite marks the attainment of ritual adulthood for girls and must be completed before she is married.<sup>2</sup>

The central event is the twelve day sequestering of young girls

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<sup>1</sup>In this popular tale, the Bodhisattva gives all of his material possessions, his kingdom, and finally his family to others, as evidence of his non-attachment and his perfection in self-less giving.

<sup>2</sup>The texts also mention that if Baran Cwanegu is done, a woman's periods throughout her life will not be painful (Vajracarya 1963: 12).

who have not yet menstruated. During this time they must not see any males or see the sun. At the end of this confinement, they are led blindfolded to the rooftop where they first look at the sun reflected in a pan of water. They worship it as part of their second "marriage," this time to the sun god. One Vajrācārya priest identified the sun god with Chandra Sri Kumar, whom he called a Bodhisattva.

Unlike the frightening period of confinement that follows immediately after the Parbatiya Hindu girl's first menses (Bennet 1982), Tuladhar girls are secluded well before their periods begin. For them, Baran Cwanegu is a wonderful time filled with friend's visits, specially prepared foods, and new toys. Thus, Newar Buddhist tradition has turned a difficult Hindu samskāra into a holiday of sorts, with the exception of one observance. There are two restrictions the girls must observe with regard to eating salt and using make-up and mirror, suggesting that Baran Cwanegu is a brata of sorts for worshipping the sun (though it is not called that). The rule is that the daughter cannot eat salt or use a mirror until she applies (the old tradition's) barley flour make-up. Once she does this, however, she cannot leave the confinement room, even unto death. (If she dies, she will be buried in the ground beneath the house and will likely become an evil spirit.) This is a very rare occurrence, but it pushes the girl's family to postpone breaking the taboo on salt for as long as possible. For this reason, a shrine to a special protector of the Baran confinement room, the Baran Khyā, is established to protect her.

On the day of breaking the confinement, the family Vajrācārya is called to perform the "Removal Ritual," which is an applied kalash

pūjā. After being led upstairs in their finest wedding clothes and "shown the sun" by a Vajrācārya woman (gurumā), the family welcomes the daughter into the pūjā room with Las Khus. The guruju leads her through a guru maṇḍala pūjā and then a panchopacāra pūjā to the sun god using a metal disc with a painted maṇḍala of twelve parts as the chief image. She then worships Ganesh, the house's gods, and receives red ṭikā on her parting from the household's female thākali. The symbolism of this rite is of a second marriage, this time to the sun god, sūrdya, whom the Vajrācārya tradition identifies as a Bodhisattva.

As for Janko, the initiated family members may perform a Kumārī pūjā and take samāy prasād before breaking their fast with a feast. The family later hosts a feast for family and close friends during the evening.

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## 9. MENARCHE

This biological point of transition is not marked with a special ritual. The older women of the household offer emotional support and teach the girl how to use either the traditional hīṣa kapa, a piece of folded cotton tied around the waist, or else a western device imported from India.

Women refer to this time as "thi maju" ("touching improper"), though this is not literally observed. Informants say that if a woman who is Thi maju touches a god, she incurs pāp. In this state she must not touch the gods, carry the house's pure water, or prepare offerings. As mentioned in Chapter V, Tuladhar women have far fewer



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PLate 69: Baran  
Cwanegu: First Sighting  
of the Sun Reflected in  
a Water Vessel



Plate 70: Wedding (1): The Bride's Last Meal at Home

restrictions to observe at this time as compared to Hindu women.

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#### 10. COMING OF AGE, LIFE BEFORE MARRIAGE

Over the last three generations, the age at marriage has continued to rise. Fifty years ago, children were commonly married at the age of six in Asan Tol. The average age in my sample from 1979-1982 was 19 for girls, 22 for boys.

By their late teens, boys are expected to take responsibilities in the business, even if they attend college. Tuladhar young men sing in the Jñānamālā Bhajan and make picnic outings around the Valley. Riding motorcycles is their most desired hobby. This is also a time to band together with age mates. Some groups hang out in the main square after the market closes and like to be a little loud.

Girls in their late teens tend to be more home-bound, with the growing exception of going to college. They must learn the "women's work" of their caste: cooking, cleaning, ritual propriety, etc. . Though the elder males of the house may limit her excursions outside, a young woman enjoys considerable freedom within. Her work load is usually not heavy for this is the province of the women married into the household.

Though there are old ways and means of flirting in Asan (e.g. evening jātrās or on rooftops at major festivals), the tendency of the young Tuladhars to elope has not increased over the past several decades. Over 95% of the marriages recorded in the past two decades were within the prescribed marriage circle of the Urāy. This tendency is attributed to several factors: the fact that the principals have a

strong voice in approving the arrangements proposed, the enduring strength of the social bonds in the family, and the force of social opinion against those who deviate. In the midst of the widespread borrowing of western clothes, media (cassette tape players, video, English literature and press), and "modern ideas", most marriages in Asan still follow the traditional lines. Many of the young know of marriage in the western world: they are intrigued by the "love marriage" but critical at the widespread divorce rate. Most still feel that their system is superior.

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## 12. MARRIAGE

For young men, marriage is the final stage of fully entering the adult world. Having a bride adds new responsibilities and complexities to the man's role in the household. For young women, marriage offers the hope of romantic love and fulfillment, both as a wife and, later, as a mother. But marriage also means that she must shift her center to a new household and live among strangers where life can be much more demanding under the authority of her mother-in-law. As a woman approaches marriageable age, the sense of expectation and fear mingle. The tears brides shed when departing from their natal homes during the rituals are very real.

For Tuladhar families, a marriage is the time to express status through the quality of the marriage alliance, the quantity of dowry sent with the bride, and the magnitude of the feasting. Materially and in the family's conduct, all of the qualities respected in Newar Buddhist society are exhibited and socially scrutinized. For this

reason, the maximum affordable expenditure is made and great energy is focused on traditional performances.

### Arrangements<sup>1</sup>

In modern Asan, the boy's family usually makes the first movement toward finding a marriage partner. Any family member may take interest in looking for a suitable match. At various points in the process of checking out the other family's child, the principals and/or the families can signal encouragement or discourage further progress. One sign of earnestness is finding a middleperson, usually a woman, who can negotiate between families without social embarrassment to resolve the situation. If a woman is successful, she will serve as the lami or matchmaker, having a continuous role in the marriage rituals. In some cases, this is not a one-time formality: the lami may also be asked to act as a mediator if the couple have troubles later in their lives.

One key stage that must be reached is the exchange of the jātas, horoscopes, for consultations with the family astrologers. Certain astrologically indicated character traits can be calculated and used, factually or not, as a reason for accepting or rejecting a potential prospect. Once negotiations do reach this point, families must decide if the match is proper, for there are no remaining socially acceptable

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<sup>1</sup>The following description of the Tuladhar wedding customs is not as complete as an exhaustive full treatment of the week of ceremonies would require. To do so here would make this chapter excessively lengthy. We therefore outline the major events, reserving more extensive description and analysis for future publication.

"outs." If both say the horoscopes are ju, the lami will facilitate fixing the date of Gwāye Dān Biyegu.

### Gwāye Dān Biyegu

The boy's side begins the elaborate series of wedding exchanges by sending a load of offerings for the bride's family. The presentation is supervised by the lami who also declares the groom's family's desired wedding dates; if there is a conflict, she helps fix the exact date.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the formal presentation of betel nuts, the groom's family sends gifts according to its means: saris, jewelry, and foods. One key item is a a class of large-sized confections called lākha mari, a sweet used only in weddings. The bride's family distributes it to their relatives when the marriage dates are announced. The size of the lākha mari given is carefully correlated with the closeness of the kin and the intimacy of relations.

### Payan Biye Bhwāy or Ban Bhwāy

The bride's family holds a large baji bhwāy ("beaten rice feast") several days before the rituals begin. Usually supervised by a husband of one of the bride's sisters, preparations for feeding several hundred or more guests stretch over two days. The Tuladhars set up a "deity of the storeroom", bari dya, and worship it each day to insure the smoothness of kitchen activity. For large feasts, there is usually a specially hired cook and elder "taste testers" (usually

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<sup>1</sup>As mentioned in Chapter VII, only a few months of the year are suitable for weddings.



including a guruju) to insure that the food is good. An essential food for the wedding feasting is takhā:, a boiled and later congealed mixture of buffalo marrow, skin, and meat.

At the time for the feasting to begin--as specified in the printed invitations<sup>1</sup> sent out days before-- the married-out daughters come to help by welcoming the guests and accompanying them into the feasting area. First the gods of the house, then the gurujus, and finally the guests are served the feast. Depending on the family means, there will be numerous servings of baji, vegetables, and meats. The women of the house, wearing their finest red saris, pour āyla between each course. If there is not sufficient room for all to eat at once there will usually be two or more seatings, with the women eating first. After the last course of sweetened yogurt, a Jyapuni comes with water and a basin for each to wash his hands and rinse the mouth.<sup>2</sup>

The women then proceed to where the bride attired in her wedding sari has taken a seat. Each guest steps up to her and gives a wedding present that has the donors name clearly appended. In return, the bride gives each a betel nut and a sweet.

The payan biye bhwāy is tinged by the sadness of the bride's imminent departure, in contrast to the more ebulent wedding feasting held later at the groom's house. It is now quite common on both sides

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<sup>1</sup>Urban Newars have a highly developed invitation vocabulary for indicating exactly who is invited to come for a feast. Although this system is too detailed for inclusion here, it shows the culture's emphasis on feasting as a key form of exchange.

<sup>2</sup>Untouchable castes come to the feasts to pick up the discarded feast leaves and keep the food on the plates.

for there to be a second wedding feast, a "party," that is usually a western-style buffet dinner to which non-Newar friends are also invited. Disco music and dancing celebrate the wedding in a modern genre.

At this time, some families may have a śrāddha pūjā done at the time of the wedding feasting to insure that recently departed spirits are happy.

### Baggi Chwayegu

While the bride's family is feasting, the groom's family makes preparations. Many Tuladhars have their houses refurbished before a wedding; at the very least, the Panca Buddha entrance marker must be retouched by a Chitrakar painter.

Usually on the day of the first procession or else four days before, the groom's family sends a load of gifts which must include:

1. A large, decorated clay pot (baggi) filled with a confection called gwāra mari and other small gifts;
2. a jug full of buffalo milk (said to repay the mother for suckling her daughter) with the auspicious time for fetching the bride, as determined by an astrologer, pasted on its side;
3. a large container filled with traditional make-up and ornaments; and,
4. the essentials for a large scale Dhau sagan and Khe sagan.

All of these are carried by a Jyapu to the bride's house accompanied by a man of the Sakya caste who carries two additional gifts. Once at the house, the bride's family presents Khe sagan to him at the conclusion of which the Sakya ties two gold bracelets around the bride's wrists. This is followed by the presentation of two Dhau sagan to all present: one sent from the groom's family, one from the bride's.

The bride then takes the baggi , breaks through the paper seal and gives out the grapefruit-sized gwāra mari (in order): to the household gods (Ganesh, Ajimā, Āgam Dya, Digu Dya), to the paternal uncles (Pajus), to all of the senior women of her family. The toys and fruit at the bottom are given to the children present. Another Khe sagan is served, followed by an elaborate cooked rice feast. Once finished, the bride's family immediately replenishes and sends back sagan offerings to the groom's house the sagan offerings. His family then sits and the eldest women serves both.

Cvāyaka: Wanegu

That same evening, a party of men from the groom's side-- but lacking the groom himself -- goes to the bride's home dressed in their finest clothes<sup>1</sup> and accompanied by a hired band.

This procession is:

2 lamp bearers  
^  
|  
Musical band  
^  
|  
2 Candle (torch) bearers  
^  
|  
Sixty men,  
accompanied by the family Guruju

It is also prestigious to have a man dressed in Tibetan clothing which suggests family trading ties with Lhasa.

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<sup>1</sup>Most men now wear western style suits. The wedding band now uses western musical instruments, replacing the older form, called Pañca bājan.



Plate 71: Wedding (2): Bhau Maca Khan Lhyāyegu



Plate 72: Wedding (3): Giving Betel Nuts to Husband's Kin

Once at the bride's house, the male relatives closest to the groom-- i.e. the phuki (excluding the father), his Pajus, and associated jilajon (sister's husbands)-- are shown into a special room where the bride's family (with their guruju in attendance) serve them fine foods and converse. This group stays late into the night for the purpose of insuring that the next day's proceedings go off on time and that all relations between the families are clear.

The others in the procession wait outside as their band plays. They are served masala pwo, paper-wrapped "spice pockets" containing more than twenty spices, by the bride's Jilajons. After a half hour or so of waiting there, they leave.

On this evening at her Pāju's house, the bride gets a manicure by the family barberess and has red color, ala:, applied to her toenails. Later she returns home for sagan and joins her immediate family in a very large feast for which her plate is placed on a raised stand, the taybo.

### Fetching the Bride

By noon on the next day, the groom's party sets out as in the day before with the addition of a decorated rented car. As this party waits outside (and the groom's guruju, who is present inside, invariably lobbies for a quick completion of her family's ceremonies), the bride bids a formal farewell to her family and phuki with sagan and then by giving each person--who comes up to her alone-- betel nuts and a small silk purse. With the lami beside her assisting, the exchanges conclude with her closest relatives. As they come, in order from juniormost to seniormost, each gives her a special gift, some

very expensive, in a tearful scene.<sup>1</sup> A careful record is kept of these dowry gifts that will accompany her to the groom's house. After the farewell to her father and, lastly, her mother, the former leads her to the groom's car on which the du phanga -- formerly a hammock used to bear Newar brides -- has been placed. She is accompanied in the departure by the lami and usually two sobila ("handmaidens", usually Jyapunis) who assist her over the next days at the groom's house.

Bhau Macā Khan Lhāyegu ("Talking About the Young Bride")

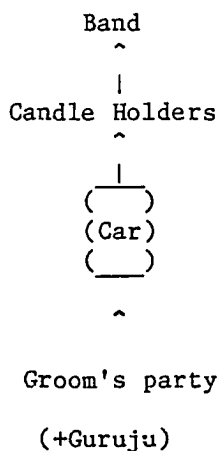
The procession proceeds to the nearest Ganesh temple, to which point the bride's father and Guruju also come. Here the bride's Guruju makes a short speech on the virtue of the bride and the expectation of good treatment by her new household; the groom's Guruju follows with assurances that the bride will be an honored daughter of the family. The groom's party continues and the bride's contingent returns home.<sup>2</sup>

The procession is as follows:

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<sup>1</sup>Even highly educated, westernized brides find this a highly emotional situation. As one said to me afterward, "I was all right until I put on the red wedding sari." The women of the house seem to relive their own natal separations and identify with her misery. Usually one of the recently married-in wives comes to the departing one's assistance in a scene both lovely and touching.

<sup>2</sup>A Tuladhar father is very emotion-laden at this moment, and he is encouraged to cry if he feels like doing so when he returns home.



At the entrance to the groom's house, the bride is greeted with las khus and led into the house by her mother-in-law. Once inside and as assisted by the lami, she presents betel nuts to all of the household deities and then, after she is seated, to all in the groom's family who come forward individually to receive betel nuts from her hands. Once this is done, the groom's Guraju takes charge of the proceedings as the "master of ceremonies". Throughout the rituals and for the entire wedding period, brides are very submissive, almost always keeping their heads bowed.

At this point a very newly introduced rite, the svayamvara<sup>1</sup>, may be done. The bride circumambulates the groom three times and presents him with a garland. After he gives her a gold necklace, the bride bows down and touches his feet.

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<sup>1</sup>Informants knew that one Tuladhar family introduced the popular Hindu rite, Svayamvara, in 1978 and that it was never done before that time. (Their doing so has been a subject for gossip ever since.) In two of the three weddings I witnessed it was done.

### Honkegu

Honkegu is the traditional Buddhist ceremony that marks the marital union. Performed at an astrologically determined time, the groom's father brings the couple's heads together as his mother pours taila luiyegu over them.

### Taybo Nakegu

After Honkegu, a large feast plate with many foods on it along with āyla, twoñ, and red twoñ cups are placed before the couple. First, the groom eats bits of food, then feeds a few pieces to the bride. This gesture formally establishes the commensual relations between the couple and asserts the groom's expectation that the bride accept his cipa leftovers. All present then share a large feast. The leftover food from the couple must be specially deposited at the local cwasa.

On the next morning, the bride is introduced to the deities of the house as she makes offerings to all the shrines, including the Āgam Dya.

After the family shares Khe sagan, the bride sits next to the mother-in-law and both are served a cooked rice feast and the three alcoholic beverages. As in the ceremonies the night before, the bride must again eat the cipa foods, in this case from her mother-in-law's plate.

### Pasta Bhwāy

That evening, the family holds its large traditional feast in largely the same style as the ban bhwāy. For a son's marriage above



Plate 73: Wedding (4): Tuladhars Perform the Newly Introduced Svayamvara Rite



Plate 74: Wedding (5): A Subdued Bride Awaits the Next Ritual, Assisted by the Lami (Seated to her left)

all others, a Tuladhar family will expend effort and expense to make the most elaborate feast possible. At the end of the serving, the groom, assisted by his Pajus, goes down the lines to give each guest a pastry. The phuki women follow behind pouring āyla with relentless hospitality. The eldest male of the patriline, accompanied by other senior males and by the family guruju, also makes the rounds to be sure his guests are fully satisfied.

At the end, the bride is "put on display" near the exit. As the guests leave, they pass by her, some admiring her in her finery, others following the accepted custom of making critical comments on her appearance.

### Sin Pyake

On the next morning, the groom and bride are welcomed into the same pūjā room with las khus where the guruju has set up a kalash pūjā to Avalokiteśvara. The groom, assisted by his mother, takes the role as chief jajmān with the bride also making offerings. Once this is completed, the guruju directs the groom to take down the bride's hair, wet it with kalash water, and comb it into five divisions. He then applies ṭikā to the center part, then wraps a string around this section, then around the other four and finally wraps the whole together. He then puts a special silver ornament (bata na:tu) on the centralmost part to which he adds a peacock feather and an old-style comb.<sup>1</sup> Done in a light-hearted spirit (which all but the bride share), the groom concludes this rite by holding up a mirror so that she can

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<sup>1</sup>This practice may have roots in the royal consecration rituals mentioned in the Buddhist texts (Snellgrove 1959: 207).

see the effect. This is followed by Dhau sagan.

Next the couple sits together and breaks open a large sealed pot (baggi). As done in the bride's house, they distribute the contents to the household gods, elders, and children.<sup>1</sup>

Once this is completed, the father once again holds the couple's heads together as the mother pours taila luiyegu. Finally, the bride is again led to worship at the household shrines with a pūjā ba: . This time she returns to give everyone prasād and ṭikā.

The next morning, the couple go to the Bijesvari (Akasha Joginī) temple accompanied by the immediate family and the guruju to make offerings. At this place, the groom finally marks the bride's hair parting with red sindur powder, an act that brings to an end the round of rituals in the groom's house.

#### Khvā Svayegu

That evening the bride goes to see the men of her natal family at the house of a third party. The latter make gifts of cloth, jewelry, and money to her and receive hospitality offerings (cigarettes, masala pwo) by the jilajon of the groom's family who accompany her. The bride then returns to her natal house with her father. She has become a mhāy masta, a married-out daughter, and Tuladhar custom specifies that she must now bow to the feet of men from her house when she meets them.

Later that night the groom, accompanied by his guruju, comes for a visit and become the object of practical jokes. Later, after the

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<sup>1</sup>This is clearly symbolic of the groom opening the bride's womb.

groom presents betel nuts to the bride's family, the bride joins him, dressed in a new sari, to receive Dhau sagan and Khe sagan then all are served a large feast. The bride returns with the groom to his house in the early morning hours and on this night the marriage is sexually consummated.

The next morning, the bride returns to her own house again (ta cheñ) for a stay of at least one month. Several days later, the groom's family may hold another modern party.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the first year of marriage, the groom and his family send especially large offerings with the bride when she is called home for special pūjās (e.g. Mother's Day, Father's day, etc. ). She may spend about half of her first year of marriage in her ta cheñ as she slowly shifts her life's center to her husband's household.

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### 13. MARRIED LIFE

Once married, a man's chief concern is the family business. Over time and especially after the parents die, the chief issue is the relationships with his brothers. At present, about 60% of the Tuladhar households (defined as a "hearth-sharing unit") in Asan are nuclear. Individuals must struggle between two poles: the ideal of brothers staying together versus the multitude of forces, both ancient and modern, that push siblings toward having their own space where they exercise sole control.

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<sup>1</sup> A few modern brides have even been seen dancing at these affairs -- something unthinkable by the older standards -- but they usually wait to do so until after the elders have left.

For the wife, her life after marriage is the story of her integration into the husband's family. Her intimacy with her husband remains strictly private, a domain of life apart from the other new relationship with her mother-in-law. The ideal is that a wife should bow to her husband's feet daily and serve him submissively, just as she must be fully obedient to his mother. The ideal qualities in a Tuladhar woman are summed up by the term pratibrath, meaning "chaste, faithful." For a new Tuladhar bride, sustaining a college education and other outside interests is often difficult. Although the situation is innately trying, there are many cases from my experience in which women carried on all their roles with kindness and sensitivity.

One important feature of the new bride's early years is the support given to her by her natal home. Unlike the Jyapu women, who can return to their ta: cheñ as a fully acceptable alternative residence if relations in her husband's household sour (Pradhan 1982), Tuladhar women cannot return easily if the relationship turns bad. They do spend extensive periods there, however, especially in the first years, a process of advance and retreat which eases the transition.

After the birth of the first children, the ties with the ta: cheñ begin the life-long process of loosening. Over time, the Tuladhar wife will progress upward to levels of status and responsibility in her husband's household and return to stay less frequently.

Divorce is not common among the Asan Tuladhars. For a woman to elope out of her proper marriage is to face certain social boycott from both families, subjecting her to the risk of abandonment in her

later years. For a Tuladhar man, his place in his own home is guaranteed; he may remarry without serious stigma if the marriage ends. Polygamy is practiced, but only very infrequently among the wealthier Tuladhar families.

One old Newari saying makes the central roles of Tuladhar men and women clear:

Misata layvasi, mijan kun.

"[the worst thing] for a woman to be is unfaithful,  
for a man [the worst thing is] to be a thief."

As this verse indicates, Tuladhar society values the thrifty businessman who takes command of the family prosperity and the faithful woman who upholds the family honor.

An individual's location in his or her family's hierarchy is a decisive variable that conditions life's possibilities, personality development, and the degree of social maturity he attains as he grows older. There is therefore a broad range of variation according to the nature of the household. A man who lives as a son in a family with his father until he is fifty lives under a very different set of contingencies as compared to a son who breaks off and lives independently. Age grants power and precedence, but also entails a more active personal role in taking responsibility for the family.

As individuals move through their adult lives, daily, yearly, and life-cycle traditions prescribe an elaborate agenda out of which the Tuladhars, in large part, must weave their lives.

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#### 14. TWĀY

Newars have a tradition of ritual friendship common in Nepal called twāy (Nepali: mit) (Okada 1957; Prindle 1975; Messerschmidt 1982). These bonds are mutually agreed upon and ritually sealed by the exchange of kisli (bowls of rice, topped with betel nut and money) before an astrologically designated deity. Same-sex friends, often of different castes, may make this bond and entering into this relationship is thought to prolong both individuals' lives. Over the years, mutual assistance is given and quasi-kinship relations are acted out (in invitations to family feasts, and in adopting kin terms for one's twāy family members, etc.) This practice has declined markedly in modern times, according to informants.

A twāy relationship can also be made by a mother for a twāy between her baby and a deity. Usually done if previous children of hers have died, an earring is placed in the baby's upper ear and which may be worn throughout an individual's life. Harati Ajimā is often chosen for this type of twāy.

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#### 15. ELDERS

In the Newar traditions specifying ritual precedence and family control, the eldest men and women are recognized as the decision makers. At feasts and for Sagan, the two most frequent ceremonial activities in the household, the physical seating plan expresses this hierarchy. We have repeatedly noted that both the seniormost man and woman of the house are called "thākali" and act on behalf of the household for rituals.

Even as middle-aged sons and wives take over the main tasks of the business and running the household, elder parents still exert control and are consulted for any major decision. Very often, the senior generation sets the standard for the quality of the household's religious life.

Elders also become major figures in the grandchildren's lives. As models for imitation and as teachers, the family elders play an important role in holding Newar culture together. To the extent that extended families stay together, the elders remain key figures in the cross-generational transmission of tradition.

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#### 16. BUDA JANKO: BHIMA RATHA JANKO

For both Buddhist and Hindu Newars, Buda Janko is an optional samskāra that is done in the last stages of a person's life. To survive to the point of doing Janko is thought to be the fruit of very good karma; likewise, to do Janko is said to further strengthen a person's āyur ("life force") and insure a very good next rebirth. Because of the elaborate rituals performed over the two days it requires and with the large-scale feasting it entails, Buda Janko is a luxury that not every family can afford. Moreover, not every Newar elder wants to do Janko: being in the spotlight and going through all the trouble is not to everyone's liking. For these reasons, only about 15% of the eligible Tuladhar elders actually consent to allow their families to go through with the Janko ceremonies.

Buda Janko must be done for men on the seventh hour of the seventh day of the seventh month of their seventy-seventh year. "Budi



Janko" is the Janko done for widows who reach their sixty-sixth year, sixth month, etc. . If a husband does Janko, the wife must do so alongside him, regardless of her age.

The Janko rituals take two days to complete. As part of the rites, the sponsoring family must establish a religious monument in the name of the honored one. This can be an outdoor chaitya, but in most recent cases the family commissions a large brass plaque. As part of the ritual process, this plaque becomes an empowered icon and must receive the same set of human saṃskāras as Jana Baha Avalokiteśvara does. These plaques have a prescribed form and must feature the deity Uṣṇisavijāya, as shown in Plate 78. Because of this ritual requirement, it is appropriate to invite girls to perform their Ihi saṃskāra as part of the Janko. In the process, the Janko elder also acquires the punya of sponsoring their saṃskāra. We describe the main events of a Budi Janko (i.e. a Janko for a senior woman alone) held in Ta Chen Bahā in the fall of 1980.

Day One. Outside of the site for the ceremonies, all receive las khus given by the thākali-naki of the household sponsoring the Janko. Holding the Vajrācārya's vajra, the Janko elder leads the senior male of the family into the courtyard as the latter holds the Janko plaque. He is followed by the Ihi girls.

There are two central pūjās. The first is a double kalash pūjā using the "Dhan so Maṇḍala" which has thirty-two Bodhisattvas arranged around Akshobhya Buddha at the center. This elaborately laid-out pūjā is kept in place for both days.

+ Plate 75: Buda Janko (1): The Nava Graha Pūjā +

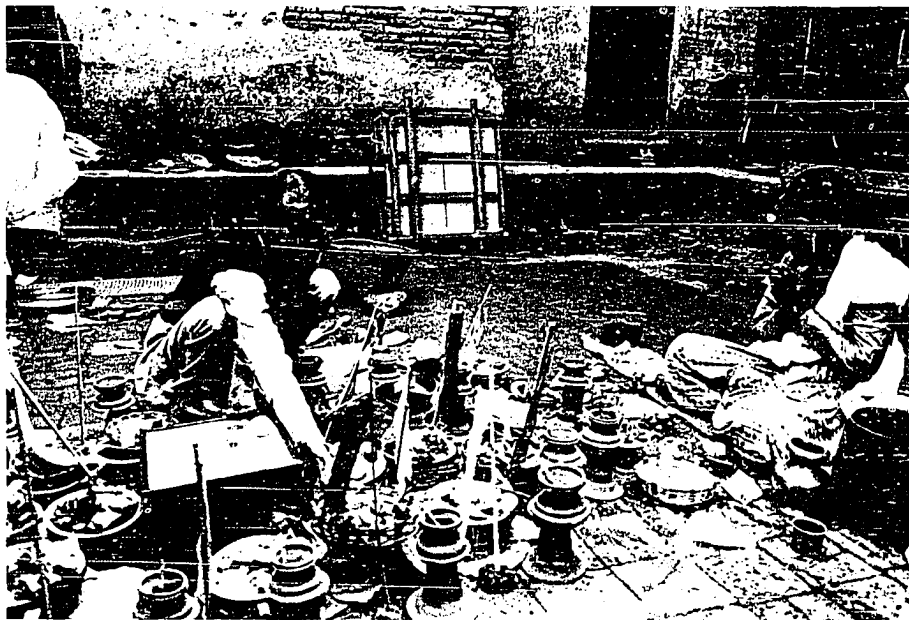


Plate 76: Buda Janko (2): Dana Offering to a Newar Brahman



The second pūjā is to the Nava Graha , the Nine Planets. It is the same pūjā done for a man's birthday, but on a more lavish scale. The intention is also the same: to insure the elder's good health and well-being. For the first day's activities, the elder is led through pūjās to both maṇḍalas by the Vajrācārya pūjārī.

Day Two. Before the activities of the second day begin, a carpenter comes to build the small wheeled car (ratha) to be used in the day's ceremonies.

All again receive a las khus at the start. The central pūjās are a homa and a MahaBali, the latter being a ritual that propitiates the evil spirits of the neighborhood. Along with the Ihi girls, the Janko elder has her nails pared by a barber. She then receives a special purificatory "bath": droplets of tīrtha water, honey, and pañca amṛta are poured over her head by the family.

After the elder then goes inside and changes into new formal clothes, the senior male family member carries her from the house on his back (i.e. "piggy-back style") and places her in the now completed ratha. As shown in the plates, the four-wheeled roofed vehicle is decorated with garlands, colorful papers, aṣṭa mangala pictures. Four guardian deities (lokapālas) are placed at the corners, and the forward opening is flanked by two small horses called bwo sala.<sup>1</sup> The symbolic order of the ratha is completed by a yantra of white chalk written on the seat by the guruju, over which the straw-mat seat is

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<sup>1</sup>Informants identified these horses with the horse form of Avalokiteśvara from the Singhasatabahu epic. This symbolism likely recalls a past era when the ratha was horse-drawn.

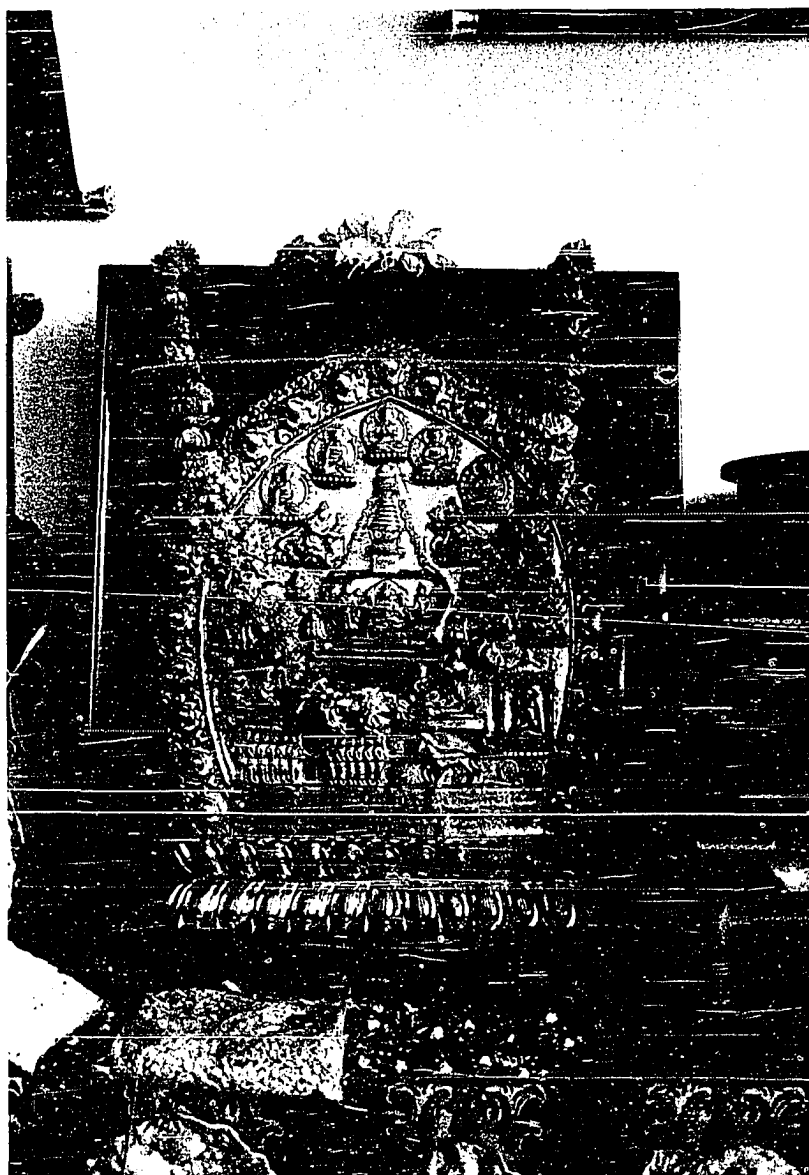


Plate 77: Janko Plaque, with Usnisavijaya as the Central Deity

placed.

Once seated inside, the elder becomes the focal point of the remaining ceremonies. First, a Newar Brahmin is called to receive godān, the gift of a living cow by the elder. She also gives him prasād from the previous maṇḍala pūjās. Second, the chief Vajrācārya places an eye-shaped tika on the elder's forehead. After the presentation, the elder gives him and other specially summoned Vajrācāryas and their wives special dakṣiṇā. Finally, she gives a small rectangular piece of silver with a man incised upon it, called ātmadān, to the chief Vajrācārya pūjārī.

The senior male then places a copper bowl beneath the elder's feet. As the pūjārī chants, he pours pancāmṛta from a conch over them. After all is poured, he touches his head to the elder's feet (aṅ yāye). Then, in order of decreasing seniority, all of the men of the family do the same, followed by the women. The Gurumā then puts vermillion on the elder's part and the women of the family then put silver kikimpā (feather-shaped ornaments) into the elder's hair.<sup>1</sup>

The women of the house lead the entourage holding (in order): a broom, a kalash from which water is continuously poured, and a second kalash. Next comes the senior male holding the Janko plaque while behind him the elder's children and grandchildren pull the ropes which move the ratha.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the Ihi girls follow the ratha. As the procession moves ahead, attendants put down white cloths in the path

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<sup>1</sup>All of the ornaments given here are those bestowed upon Newar deities just as the ratha procession that follows also reiterates this identification of the elder with a deity.

<sup>2</sup>If a husband and wife are doing the Janko, the pulling groups are the same sex as the elders.

Plate 78: Buda Janko (3): Children and Grandchildren Pulling the Elder



Plate 79: Buda Janko (4): Godan ("Cow Offering") to a Brahman

of the ratha, another custom usually reserved for deities. Although going around the town boundaries is the most elaborate outing nowadays, few Janko processions are taken outside of the confines of the courtyard in which the ceremonies are held.

Once this procession is finished (usually three times around a courtyard chaitya), the homa and MahaBali pūjās are completed in regular order. The elder is served a large feast plate on a taybo to break her fast.

When the pūjās are complete, the prasād-dakṣiṇā exchanges are made and the elder, the Vajracaryas, and the Ihi girls sit in a line as laymen come to make offerings to them. The phuki of the elder's family don the white bentali turbans which celebrate the successful completion of the saṃskāra and sponsor a large feast is held in the evening.

The major theme of Buda Janko is the assertion that the elder is now in a higher plane of human existence, one that approaches, or anticipates, his or her divine status. The paraphernalia of divinity marks the elder's superior karmic status of reaching this age just as the performances assert special recognition in society. The rituals of Janko also propitiate the deities who can aid in the person's longevity (Nava Graha, Bodhisattvas) to insure that the person's after-death destiny will be very good (the gift of a cow to a Brahman<sup>1</sup>, worshipping Sukhavati Lokeshvara, etc.). The pūjās from the establishing a shrine and the elder's sponsoring the Ihi

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<sup>1</sup>See the discussion under the Gai Jātrā festival where we discuss cow worship in this regard.

samskāra also enhance the elder's karmic destiny. Tuladhars say that those elders who have a Janko acquire a fearlessness toward death and/or are ready to die. Finally, a man doing Buda Janko --but not a woman-- is entitled to a special cremation in which he is carried to the ghat and cremated in a seated position. This is also a privilege that helps insure a good destiny and, like all of the ceremonies associated with Buda Janko, testifies to the family's prestige.

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#### 17. BUDA JANKO II: DEVA RATHA JANKO

At reaching the age of 88 years, eight months, eight days, eight hours, a second Janko can be done. The Kalash pūjā is to Basundhara and the aṣṭamātrkāś. There are also secret rites "to secure the eight siddhis (Vajrācārya 1963: 14)."

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#### 18. BUDA JANKO III: MAHĀ RATHA JANKO

For this rare Janko done at the age of 90 years, nine months, nine days, nine hours, the Kalash pūjā is to Uṣṇīśavijāya. Secret rituals are done "to remove the three kleśas (Vajrācārya 1963: 15)." No one in Asan could recall seeing this Janko.

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#### 19. DEATH AND THE FIRST PERIOD OF MOURNING

For thirteen days after a person dies, the Tuladhars must follow a highly elaborated regimen of ritual observances. Unlike the more casual attitude in evidence nowadays toward most other samskāras, the Tuladhars display a serious regard for observing the proper form of



Plate 80: A Cremation  
Procession Arrives at  
the Ghat



Plate 81: A Gon Supervises the Cremation Burning



these rites. Whatever else they believe, most Tuladhars know from their own experience that unhappy spirits do exist.<sup>1</sup> Thus, at death an individual feels sometimes contradictory pulls with love for the deceased comingling with a fear of the consequences of his or her becoming an evil spirit. Both merge in the wish to do everything possible to insure a happy after-death destiny for the dead one.

We will outline the elaborate cycle of ritual practice that follows after a Tuladhar dies.

### Death

Newar Buddhist tradition teaches that a person's life force, prāṇāvāyu, leaves the body via one of the nine bodily orifices. Because the uppermost lead to the best destinies, special medicines, libations on the legs, and godān ("gift of a cow") may be given if death is imminent. A Vajrācārya may also coach the dying to recall his meditation mantras to accomplish this goal (Vajracarya 1963: 20).

Unlike the Hindu Newars, who prefer to and prepare for dying at a riverside ghat, Buddhists think it best to die at home.<sup>2</sup> If this is the case, or if the person has died outside, the body is placed

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<sup>1</sup>Every Tuladhar child I ever asked about spirits (bhūts, pretas, khyā, etc.) could recount many incidents of seeing or hearing these beings in their neighborhood. Most could recount tales told in their families about encounters with them. Almost all were afraid of spirits, frightened to go out into evening darkness, and went to sleep with the electric lights on.

<sup>2</sup>A special class of Ayurvedic doctors called ghati baidya exists in Kathmandu. They predict the imminence of death and counsel Newar Hindu families with a very sick member on when to set out for the riverside ghat. The best position for a Newar Hindu to die is with his feet immersed in the holy Ganges. Since all of the Kathmandu Valley's rivers are tributaries of the Ganges, this is indeed the ideal (Durkin 1982).

in an upper-storey room after the floor has been coated with a cow dung and red clay mixture. After the body is then washed and dressed in good clothes, family members place a small iron knife on the chest to protect the body against spirits and to remind the hovering spirit that its body is dead. Once these preparations are made, the body is covered with a white cloth and one or more wick lamps are lit and kept burning beside it. No one in the house can eat until the full cremation process is completed.

The family must immediately send messages to the Pālā of the cremation guthi, members of the phuki (if they live elsewhere), and to close matrilineal relations. The phuki members come to help and stay in the company of the close family to lend support. The Pālā, in turn, sends messages to all of the guthiyārs. Once they start to arrive, the procession preparations begin. The female relations, a group the Tuladhars call "paṅga tha: wa:pin", come bearing a small cloth, paṅga (hence their name "those coming with paṅga"), which they place on the dead one's chest. These women also stay and help with the arrangements, a role that the family depends upon for the entire mourning period. The husbands of the married-out daughters, the Jilajon, also come as they have a role in the cremation procession. When all have come, the dead one's horoscope is placed on his/her forehead.<sup>1</sup>

If a dead male has left a widow, she must take off hair ribbons, bangles, and other ornaments. It is expected that a woman will cry

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<sup>1</sup>If the person dies and the body cannot be recovered, all of the cremation rites, including a procession to the ghat, is still carried out using the horoscope which is burned after the rituals are performed.

and lament the husband's death loudly whereas, in contrast, men are not expected to act devastated by a wife's death. From the death until the end of the thirteenth day, the phuki males, married-in wives, and unmarried children are all in a state of death pollution called du malegu. Married-out daughters and other matrilineal relatives do not incur death pollution from their natal homes. In du malegu, the family cannot make outside pūjā offerings, dine outside, or entertain guests.<sup>1</sup>

The family must decide who among them should be the chief mourner and light the funeral pyre.<sup>2</sup>

Once the guthiyārs arrive, they begin constructing the shoulder-borne cremation conveyance, the kuta:. They lash many cross-pieces of hardwood across two long bamboo poles using wetted straw to bind them. The guthiyārs then decorate this frame with garlands, yak hair, and flags painted with the aṣṭa maṅgala ; the guthi also arranges for the services of two low caste musicians: a drummer and a cymbal player. (In my experience these were from the chamkala caste). Several guthiyārs also arrange for the wood needed at the cremation ground.

The family guruju and the guthi guruju come to help supervise the final preparations. Once everything is ready, the chief mourner is summoned to do the last work in the house. The body is put on a

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<sup>1</sup>Recall that the only other time Tuladhars enter into this state of social and ritual isolation is in the period of birth pollution.

<sup>2</sup>Many factors condition this choice, which is determined by several norms of preference: the oldest son should light the pyre of his father; the youngest, the mother's ; a man of a generation junior to the deceased is ideal ; someone who has never lit a pyre is preferable to one who has; and women are the last resort if no male kin are available.

special bamboo mat (pulu) and covered with a white shroud cloth. The iron knife is taken away and a small piece of gold is put in the corpse's mouth. The chief mourner then sews up the white cloth so that it enshrouds the body. As they must often do in the mourning period, the women present must wail as this is done. The four guthiyārs who will carry the body then come up and tie the pulu around the shroud with rope pieces and the guthi's brocade cloth, the dyawai, is placed on top of this.

Once all is ready, the women of the house subject to du malegu go to the topmost room of the house, down the stairs, and outside to the piku luku stone. They cover their heads with shawls, hold onto one another, and cry in long lamenting sobs as they go. They are met at the entrance by a Jyapuni traditionally connected to the family who gives them water to wash their faces after which they ascend to a room overlooking the entrance and stay there. At the same time the women go outside, a guthiyār lights a cow dung and straw fire inside a clay bowl while standing under the eaves of the house. He waves the smoke around throughout the house and comes to where the body is laid out.<sup>1</sup>

After he arrives and the women return, the guthiyārs pick up the body and start down the stairs. The bājan drummer begins playing on signal when the body is moved. The chief mourner exits from the house following the Vajrācārya priest and he is usually supported on both sides by Jyapus who walk slowly alongside. He is followed by phuki members who, like him, are shoeless and wear plain shawls over their

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<sup>1</sup>The purpose of this action is to rid the premises of disease and the smell of death (Vajrācārya 1963: 20).

heads. They follow the chief mourner, seniormost first. The body is borne behind them and as it is taken outside, the women standing above drop handfuls of flowers, rice, coins, and red powder.

As the guthiyārs place the body in the kuta, the Chief Mourner drops a clay pot filled with cow dung on the piku luku stone. A female of the phuki must also deposit a set of the dead one's clothes wrapped in a rice straw mat at the cwasa after the procession begins.

The procession should not stop while it is on the way to the ghat at Karan Dipa opposite the Indriyani pītha, where only Urāy and Vajrācāryas are cremated. The proper order of the regular cremation procession is strictly followed, as shown in Figure VI-2.

(When a procession passes, Buddhist laymen should remove their hats and say Sukhāvati bhuvanay lhāy he ma: --"Let him be reborn in Sukhāvati." )

Once the procession reaches the riverside, all but the bājan ford the river on foot. (Using the bridge is maju for cremation processions.) The musicians stay behind and continue to play during the entire sequence of rituals. Once at the pyre, the guthiyārs place the body on top of seven layers of stacked wood. The dyawai is removed and the guthiyārs who carried the body immediately go back to the river to wash.

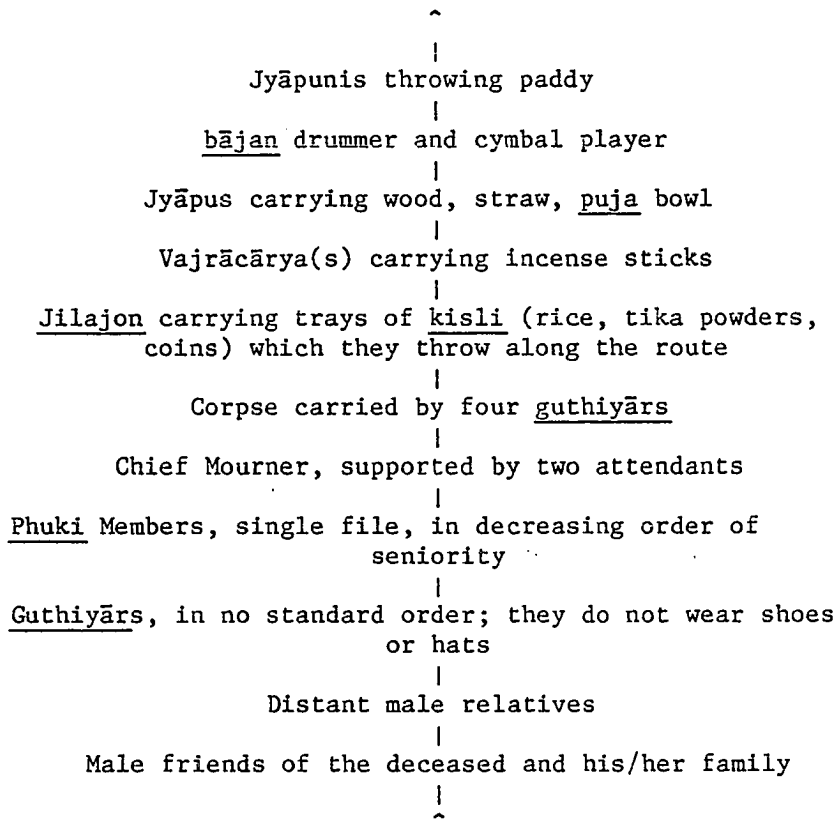
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Figure VI-2: Order of the Regular Cremation Procession:



The guruju then leads the chief mourner through a short series of pinḍa offerings to the deceased: kāk pinḍa, to avert rebirth as a pansi spirit; svana pinḍa, to avert rebirth as an animal; and finally the pret pinḍa, which can prevent rebirth as a hungry ghost (preta) and lead the deceased on the "Dharma mārga", a good religious path.

After the face is exposed, each member of the phuki makes water offerings to the corpse's mouth. The Chief Mourner has the final role, pouring water first three times around the body counterclockwise, three times clockwise, then to the corpse's mouth. He breaks the clay bowl that has contained the fire started at the



house and is handed a torch lit from it. Holding it, he circumambulates the pyre once before lighting it beneath the head. After this, he touches his head to the corpse's feet, then immediately goes back to the river. After he washes, he joins the entire phuki and sets off for town. Most chief mourners sob, often violently, throughout the rites; their hair is disheveled and their faces are blank and withdrawn.

If the family's guṭhi is a Śī guṭhi, the guṭhiyārs completely burn up the body, a task lasting twelve hours or more; if the guṭhi affiliation is a Sanā guṭhi, at this point the Gon caste men take over and the guṭhiyārs depart. In either case, when they leave the ghat, the guṭhiyārs wash at the riverside.

Urāy women do not go to the ghat.<sup>1</sup> Once the procession leaves, they must clean the house from top to bottom (opposite the normal order), a task called picā way. This dirt and all of the brooms and baskets used in the cleaning must be deposited at the cwasa. Before the men re-enter the house, they must undergo a short purificatory ritual called bali piyegu.

### Bicā

Early the next morning, friends of the deceased gather in a courtyard outside the house. Guthiyārs are obligated to attend, and attendance is kept in the hāku sāphu.

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<sup>1</sup>Interestingly, Jyāpu women do go. Male informants said that their women could not withstand the emotional trauma of seeing a cremation and most women I questioned expressed no desire to go. However, most Uray women had seen cremations at ghats. One Tuladhar man suggested that this custom may have been practiced to keep Uray widows from committing saṭi, "self immolation."

The phuki men sit together silently in a line. The family guruju sits nearby chanting the Durgati Parisodhana, a dhāraṇi to help the dead avert a bad destiny. Some Tuladhars also know the words and chant it in cycles of 108; others may call upon their own family guruju to come with them and chant. The Jilajon and guthi leaders welcome those who come.

Inside the house, the phuki women sit and cry in the room where the corpse was laid. The guthiyār wives, especially those close to the family, also may come along going inside to comfort the sobbing women for a few minutes. Close family friends may spend an extended period in the house to help in any way possible.

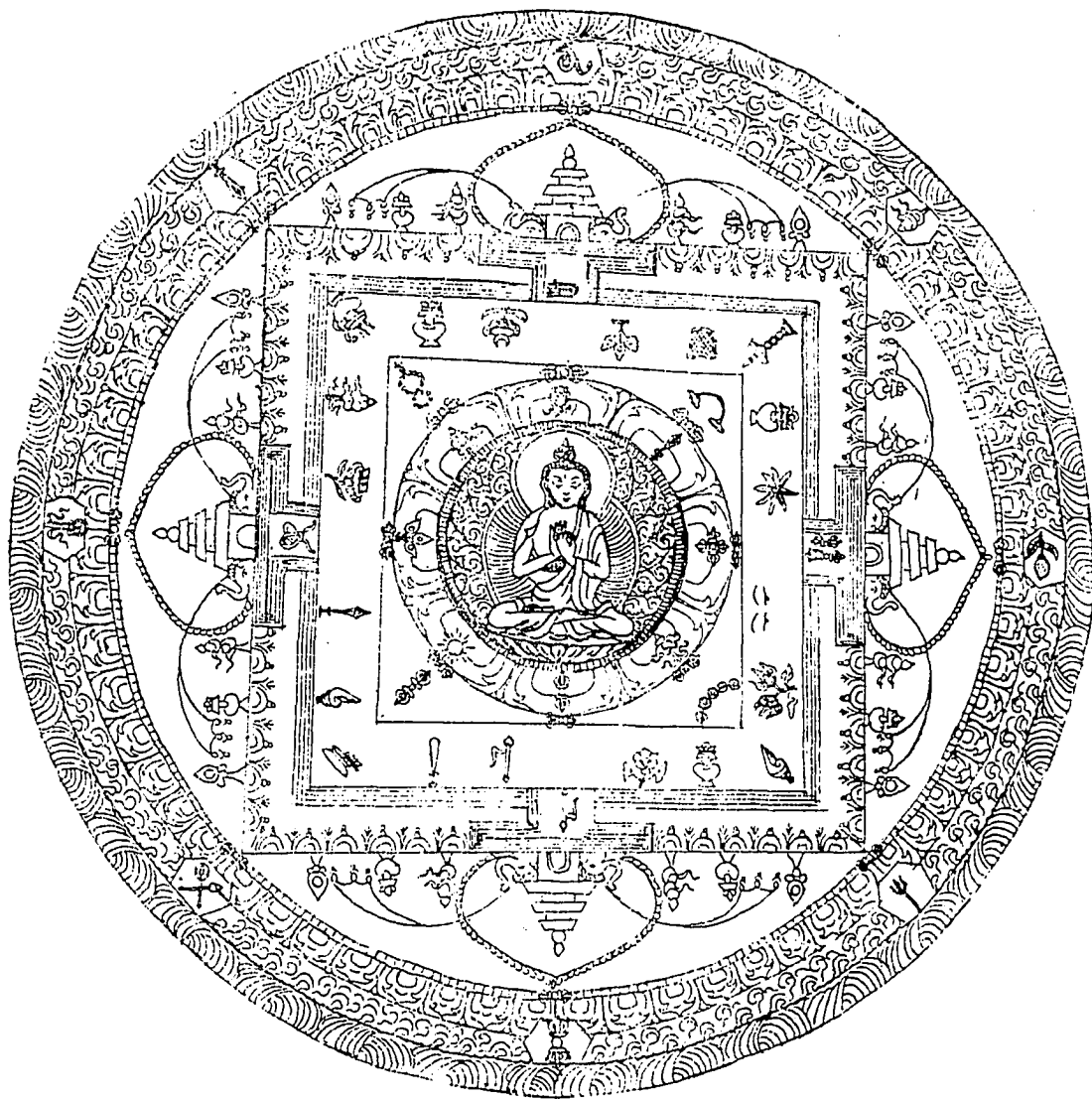
From this day until the seventh day of the mourning period, the family will put out food for the dead one.

The chief mourner must observe a number of restrictions for this period. He should not sleep alone in a separate room (for fear of the spirit returning); he must cook his own food and clean his own dishes (due to his intense pollution due to contact with the corpse); he must not eat meat or eggs for 13 days and has to abstain from milk for the first year after death. Finally, until the du byenkegu on the tenth day, he must not leave the house.

### Third Day

The family guruju comes to the house to make the Durgati Parisodhana maṇḍala. Using colored chalks and a template on the bottom of a large brass bowl, he makes this maṇḍala where the corpse was laid. This maṇḍala is shown in a Newar ritual manual as shown in Figure VI-3. (cf Skropski 1983-II: 403-417). Once the maṇḍala is made,

# दुर्गति परिशोधन मण्डल



it is covered with a large bowl that is removed only for morning offerings. A special wick lamp (called ātma) is also set alongside and is kept burning continuously while the maṇḍala is in place.

### Locā

On the evening of the fourth day, the women who offered panga and other female relations come to offer condolences to the phuki women. As the men sit silently in a separate room, these women arrive in groups, and go upstairs to the grieving women of the house. As the latter sit around the maṇḍala which is illumined by 108 deva lamps, the visitors touch them on the shoulder and remain standing. According to a modern ritual guide, "All should both mourn and remember the good qualities of the dead at this time (Vajrācārya 1981)." All of the women cry with loud wails in a standard manner.<sup>1</sup> The visitors stay only a few minutes and leave. A yogurt and beaten rice snack is always offered to them, but they never partake.

### Sixth Day

On the evening of the sixth day, the family must eat a small beaten rice feast.

### Nhenhu Jā Biye ("Giving Rice on the Seventh Day")

On this day, the guruju comes and inspects the maṇḍala. He looks at the lines in the chalk to predict, by their location, what the

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<sup>1</sup> Newars joke about the insincerity of this crying and modern young girls intensely dislike going on these visits.

departed one's rebirth fate will be. After the inspection, he destroys the maṇḍala and takes the remains of the maṇḍala and the accumulated offerings to dump them at the riverside. A small part of the mandala chalk is mixed with a red clay/cow dung mixture. It is used to make a strip of red floor coating that the women of the house apply which leads from the corpse's former location down the stairs to the entranceway of the house.

The women of the house handle most of the day's activities. A Jogi woman also comes to receive rice and other gifts in the name of the dead. The pangā wapin women prepare a large mound of cooked rice and additional rice that they place in seven small bamboo cups. For this rite at their piku luku, the phuki women dress in shawls, leaving their shoulders bare. They place these offerings on a winnowing tray and carry it to the piku luku. Other women bring a pūjā tray and a metal vessel called kwocā.

A Jogi woman meets them and places a handful of straw on the piku luku. In a short ritual, the Jogi accepts the rice offerings and places them into the kwocā, (all of which she keeps). As these offerings are made, the Tuladhar women must weep. Back at the entranceway, a Jyāpuni meets the women on their return and helps them wash their hair by pouring water from a brass water vessel. Once this ritual is done, the phuki women may again cook rice.

That evening, exactly two mānās of uncooked rice must be cooked, placed in a special basket (the Jyāpu's carrying basket, the ka:mu), and hung outside an upper storey window over the house entrance in the late evening. This is another offering to the departed one's spirit to which should be added other foods and a large wick lamp. The

Plate 82: Offerings to the Jogi Caste on the Seventh Day



Plate 83: Dāna to the Vajrācārya Guruju on Latya

Tuladhars believe that when the dead comes to partake of the food, the lamp flickers and gets very small. Neighbors often watch this lamp and report on its behavior.

### Ninth Day

The house is thoroughly cleaned and washed down (nisi yāye). The family must not eat cooked rice on this day to maintain the house's fresh level of purity.

### Tenth Day: Du Byenké

The men and women of the phuki go together to the Vishnumati riverside, where they bathe, have their nails cut, and do their morning Nikhan. After this, the men of the phuki get their hair shaved by the barber.<sup>1</sup> The family guruju supplies all of the family with a pañca gavya purification and , at the end, directs the chief mourner in putting on his barkhi lan, the white clothes he must wear for the next year. This classification includes white cloth shoes since leather in any form (shoes, belt, etc. ) is proscribed. The barber receives his old clothes as payment and as all leave the riverside, he holds up an old-style polished metal mirror, jola nhyākan, to mark the end of the prohibition against using a mirror.

Once the Chief Mourner returns to the house, he must not go out again until Nimo.

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<sup>1</sup>In modern times, the number of phuki members who have their hair shaved has decreased so that now it is unusual if anyone but the males of direct descent do so.

Gha:sū

Early on the twelfth day, the family women sweep the house out again. Outside the house, the family guruju performs a guru maṇḍala pūjā and consecrates the substances used for the purifications that follow.

After bathing and putting on new clothes, each family member comes to the guruju to receive (in order): betel leaf and nut; a small fragment of rhino skin<sup>1</sup>; sinka, a teeth cleaning stick; pañca amṛta; and pañca gavya. Each person takes the item in turn, the leavings falling into a brass bowl placed on the ground. The chief mourner receives these last. Before returning to the house, he takes the bowl with these leavings and other puja offerings to the cwasa.

The second part of the day's ritual is the purification of the house, the Gr̥ha Śuddha Yajñā Pūjā. For this, the Vajrācārya leads the chief mourner through a small scale homa puja (with only nine grain offerings) which is done right where the corpse was laid. When the fire is lit, the women of the house must cry; this crying, say informants, indicates to the spirit that his body has died and should leave the house. At several points in the ritual, the smoke from the fire is made thick in the room, ritually purifying it.

At the conclusion of the ritual, the family gives special dāna to the guruju: the deceased's bed, bed-covers, clothes, and other household utensils. As part of the puja's prasād, the guruju gives the family samāy, marking their return to meat and alcohol consumption.

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<sup>1</sup>Used in all pinda dān srāddha rituals, rhino meat is thought to insure the magical conveyance of food offerings to the deceased, a belief recorded in the Mahābhārata (Briggs 1938: 7-8).



Samāy is also sent to Luku Mahādya along with the cipa food leftovers. Tuladhar families like to call other Vajrācāryas to their houses at this time to read the Pañca Rakṣā, a text that is chanted for the protection of the household. A portion of the beaten rice feast served immediately after the pūjā is also given to the Jogi family.

That evening, another small feast is held before sunset, called Gha:sū bhwāy. The four guthiyārs who carried the body must be invited.

Tuladhar laymen say that Gha:sū is the most important ritual of the mourning period. After this ritual is complete, life can start to return to normal and the family can rest assured that the dead one's spirit will not return. The ritual performed by the Vajrācāryas is thought to be very powerful. For this reason, Shresthas still call them to do it, one of the few examples of Hindu Newars "crossing over" to enlist the services of Buddhist hierophants.

#### Day Thirteen: Nimo

After a nisi yāye cleaning of the house, the guruju leads the Chief Mourner through the first śrāddha pūjā since the cremation called dasa piṇḍa ("ten piṇḍas")<sup>1</sup>. At the same location in the house as for the earlier rites, the chief mourner must wear a yellow dhoti and utilize an uttāri, a Buddhist "sacred thread". The latter, which is never worn in ordinary life, must be worn over one shoulder and

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<sup>1</sup>The ten piṇḍas are said to build the appearance of the deceased in his new state as follows: 1. head; 2. eye; 3. nose; 4. ears; 5. heart; 6. hand; 7. stomach; 8. indriya ("sense organs"); 9. legs; 10. hair and nails (Vajracarya 1963: 26).

repositioned during the course of the ritual.<sup>1</sup>

The śrāddha ritual is a very elaborate series of piṇḍa offerings (cooked rice and other foods) to past generations of kinsmen up to the recently deceased. The Chief Mourner finally carries the full load of foods to a nearby bahā and dumps them at the three pits before the kwāpā dya called "Dharma pītha".

The general ritual formula for śrāddha done by the Vajrācāryas (i.e. making piṇḍa offerings) is the same as śrāddha pūjās done by Newar Brahmins. What is distinctive is that the laymen take refuge in the TriRatna and that the Buddhist pantheon is called upon to witness and receive offerings intended for the dead. The key deity in the Vajrayana ritual is Sukhavati Lokeshvara.

Śrāddha presents a paradoxical action in the context of Buddhist belief. According to the karma doctrine and the Buddhist notion of rebirth, śrāddha offerings have no effectiveness unless the deceased is a preta. Presumably, the śrāddha offerings at the ghat, as mentioned above, have eliminated that possibility. In our surveys we found that laymen were aware of this problem of consistency, one that they have discussed often among themselves. They feel that if the dead are not pretas, then the offerings will go to actual non-kin pretas, which is still meritorious for the dead and the living.

In the Buddhist śrāddha, we can see the extent to which the Newar Buddhist tradition retains the multiple belief structure commonly found in India. Newar Buddhism retains practices based upon the

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<sup>1</sup>The gestures follow the pattern of sacred thread movement in north India, i.e. switching it from the "normal" position (over the left shoulder, under the right arm) to the opposite when piṇḍa offerings are made, and hence, contact with the dead occurs.

ancient Vedic doctrine that after death the soul must make an arduous, year-long journey to the pitṛlok, "the realm of the fathers." A recent Vajrācārya text explicitly instructs laymen to make śrāddha offerings "so the dead can attain pitṛlok." (Vajrācārya 1963: 31)<sup>1</sup>

For the purpose of making this journey successful, the survivors must feed the soul using the śrāddha ritual. It is important to note that the Tibetans, whose tradition of Buddhist ritual in many ways closely follows the Newar Vajrayana tradition, do not do śrāddha. They recognize a maximum period of forty-nine days for the dead to be reborn (Evan-Wentz 1969).

To explain this survival among the Newars, we must look to the social context of their tradition and specifically at the role of the Vajracaryas in it. As we will see again in the next section, the income the family guruju derives from a year of śrāddha offerings is very substantial, clearly the most lucrative exchange between jajmān and priest. The exchange relationship took precedence over doctrinal consistency. As is the case in modern Japan (Morioka 1981), Buddhist priests substantially live off of the income derived from death rituals. This institution of death offerings is also supported by the

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<sup>1</sup>As yet, there is not enough historical evidence to determine whether this is a relatively new addition to the Newar Buddhist tradition or an ancient component. Wayman notes the popular Buddhist belief that "after death one must cross a river (called the Vaitarana) with the three current speeds (the karma of the three evil destinities of hell beings, animals, hungry ghosts); if the deceased can cross the river presumably he goes to one of the good destinies (1971: 448). As we have described, this general notion is found among the Newars, but not in this time frame. If Mus is correct in distinguishing Buddhist śrāddha from the Hindu ritual on the basis of the former's offerings to pretas as opposed to the latter's pitṛs (Mus 1939: 250), it is clear that the Vajrācāryas śrāddha has crossed over to the Brahmanical version.

Buddhist laymen. Tuladhars may question the existence of some gods and may even cut back on the scale of offerings given to them, but they will not as easily give up rites that their tradition says will insure their parents' future well-being.

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## 19. Śrāddha and Other Rituals for the Dead

The extremely elaborated agenda of ritual for the dead is more subject to individual family discretion in the period after the first thirteen days of mourning. Because we find rather broad differences in family practices, we shall present the possible observances that Tuladhars may choose.

### Family life

The overall ethos that colors the mourning period is withdrawal from the normal patterns of life. The chief mourner should wear white clothing and not touch leather (especially in apparel such as shoes, belts, etc.) His monthly head-shaving for śrāddha keeps his physical appearance distinct from normal. Likewise, widows may also choose to wear only white saris and not wear any decoration for the year.

Out of personal feeling and also in deference to public opinion<sup>1</sup> Tuladhar families tend to limit their activities to little besides basic functioning during the year. I found many examples of this such from cards, musical instruments, play, and any kind of large-scale socializing. It is also common to observe an increase in the family's

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<sup>1</sup>The Tuladhars readily recognize public opinion as a factor, and call it "lokācār."

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Plate 84: A Tuladhar Performing a Śrāddha Pūjā  
 (Note the uttari over the left shoulder)



Plate 85: Buddhist Śrāddha: A Vajrācārya Rings his Bell as a Tuladhar  
Family Does Pūjā Ba: Thiyegu

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interest in Buddhist Dharma, as seen in their performing Buddha pūjā in the house (usually the women are responsible for this) and in reading printed tracts.

For the first months after death, Tuladhar families and close friends freely share dreams that involve the deceased. Other strange incidents that suggest the presence of the spirit are also reported. These phenomena are supportive of the belief that the person lives on in some fashion.

Thus, in its diet, dress, preoccupations, and monthly agenda, family life in a mourning family is intentionally altered over the course of a year.

### Monthly Śrāddha

Latya is the first ritual after du byenke and is held three fortnights after the death. After the standard śrāddha pūjās, the family shares a khus pūjā. What makes latya special is that the dakṣiṇā to the family guruju is immense, comprising a set of every material thing essential to Newar life: bed, covers, sets of the deceased's clothes (which the priest must then actually wear then), pots, pans, lamps, various foods. The Tuladhars share the widespread Indian notion that gifts to a priest are conferred to the deceased if he is a preta (cf. Elder 1977: 33). One relatively wealthy family computed their cost for this day's offerings in 1981 at Rs. 6,000.

Every month on the monthly anniversary of the death for an entire year, the chief mourner and the family perform a śrāddha pūjā led by

the family guruju.<sup>1</sup> The chief mourner must be ritually purified with a shaved head and be on fast for the ritual.

Early on , the family must decide on where it will perform these rituals. All of them can be done in the home, but this is usually felt to be inadequate. The family can make an outing each month to a different śrāddha tīrtha. Newar tradition has specified a standard order for this cycle, which was already is given in Figure III-1.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the family may choose to go to the same one of the twelve tīrthas every month. Due to the proximity of the Baca Khuśi Tīrtha to Kathmandu, Asan Tulādhars often choose this option.

For the Uray, the lokotar piṇḍa is the name of the sraddha puja done in the house. The daśa piṇḍa is the pūjā done at the riverside. An alternative, more elaborate śrāddha pūjā called lin piṇḍa is often done for latya, the sixth month, and year's śrāddha observance.

At the time of doing a riverside śrāddha, families may choose to make sand chaityas in the name of the deceased; each must be given jīv ("life") by implanting a paddy grain in it.

Over the course of a year, the six month and year's death anniversary are often done with expanded observances such as calling bhikṣus, anagārikās , or lamas for a meal. The punya from dāna to them is dedicated to the deceased.

After the first year is over, families tend to call the guruju on

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<sup>1</sup>It is interesting to note that the year-long performance of śrāddha is characteristic of south India; in most areas of north India, immediate post-death śrāddha pūjās are thought appropriate for only twelve days after death.

<sup>2</sup>At each tīrtha, different offerings of flowers, incense, precious metals, etc. are also prescribed (Vajrācārya 1981: 123).

the death anniversary to do lokotar piṇḍa. The Tuladhars varied greatly in the extent of continuing these pujas: one family stopped doing śrāddha after the third year; in another, an eighty year-old man still did śrāddha on his father's death anniversary forty years later.

### Cremation Ashes

The disposal of cremation ashes also varies according to family preference. Some families simply have the cremation guthi or the Goṇs dump the whole lot into the river immediately afterwards. Other families prefer to collect the ashes and disperse them at the time of special pūjās for the deceased. In addition to the riverside tīrthas, the pilgrimage sites Namo Buddha and Manichuda, and the peaks Jamacho and Sipucho are sites usually chosen. A few wealthy Tuladhar families have even traveled to Benares to distribute ashes and perform śrāddha.

There is also a tradition of performing śrāddha and depositing the ashes on five consecutive fall days at five special tīrthas in the Kathmandu Valley.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This schedule is as follows:

<u>Tīrtha</u>	<u>Date</u>
1. Nirmal Tīrtha (Baca Khusi)	Kartik, dark 13th day
2. Cinta Mani Tīrtha (Tekha Duvan)	Kartik, dark 14th day
3. Pañca Kumārī Tīrtha (Maitī Devi)	Kartik, dark last day
4. Nidhana Tīrtha (Lakhu Tīrtha)	Kartik, bright first day
5. Kalmocana	Kartik, bright second



### Festival Participation for Mourning Families

In general, families refrain from participating in the celebratory aspects of festivals during the year.

Here we will briefly note that there is a role for mourning families specified in the yearly festival schedule, a subject treated in greater depth in Chapter VII. In Indra Jātrā, families do a pradakṣiṇā of the city on the first day and on the third go out to greet friends ceremonially along the Kumārī Jātrā route; widows may join the Dagi procession that same evening. During Gunla, families commission the Buddhacarya hierophants at Svayambhū to perform a special ritual and blow special buffalo horns as they circumambulate the hilltop.<sup>1</sup> Finally, on Bala Caturdasi the family may choose to participate in a pradakṣiṇā of the Mt. Kailash hill behind Pasupati or else perform a daylong prasakṣiṇā of Svayambhū called Gosṛn wanegu.

### Pilgrimage Pūjās in the Name of the Dead

Throughout the year, Tuladhar families may make a point of visiting as many shrines as possible in the Kathmandu Valley for the purpose of making special offerings for puṇya in the name of the dead. The most common form of pūjā is lighting 108 wick lamps (deva) at the shrine, usually without priestly assistance. Before the puja is begun, the Chief Mourner repeats a simple vow (saṃkalpa) dedicating the puṇya of the ritual to the deceased. The family members will usually go to Svayambhū, the Valley temples to Avalokiteśvara, the

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<sup>1</sup>This relates to an avadāna story known and depicted in modern Newar cultural media called Sṛṅga Bheri. The story tells of a pious woman who was granted a reunion with her dead husband who is reborn as a buffalo as a result of her worshipping a chaitya (B. Vajrācārya 1979).

four Joginīs, and the Tārā at Itum bahā, and other landmarks in the religious geography of the Valley.

The family may also focus on one particular shrine and do a set number of offerings there, for example (and most commonly) one lakh (100,000) of lamp offerings. They may even undertake doing a sava lākh pūjā at one such shrine.

### Sthāpana Yāye

Families may also choose to build ("Sthāpana Yāye") a new chaitya, or restore an existing structure in the name of the dead.

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### SAMSKARAS, NEWAR BUDDHISM, AND DEATH

The contemporary agenda of life-cycle rituals, despite its present size, still represents a considerably foreshortened ritual program compared to textually specified norms of 100 years ago. There are even gaps between what recent ritual guides specify and what is now done. There has been both the abbreviation of Buddhist rites and a simultaneous move toward rites and customs practiced elsewhere by Valley Hindus. In the latter category, we have noted the dominance of Brahmins in education, indifference to having distinctly Vajrācārya - style Ihi saṃskāras, the practices associated with Keitha Pūjā, and the newly inserted Svayamvara as part of the marriage ceremony. Likewise, it is hard to imagine classical Buddhist precedents for godān to a Brahman, as is done in the Newar Buddhist Janko, and their use of a sacred thread in the śrāddha. Despite the clearly designed

Buddhist-reworking of the ritual formats in these examples, the dominance of Brahmanical form and religious purpose (esp. removing pollution) and the lack of Vajrācārya explanation have reduced the sense of exact religious distinctiveness felt by Newar Buddhists vis-a-vis Newar Hindus.

What is surviving in the saṃskāra tradition among the Urāy are those ceremonies that still provide meaning and a sense of passage, prestige, and/or power. It is clear, for example, that the marriage agenda plays out an important cultural "drama", that baran cwanegu is still fun for young girls, and that individuals support the gestures of hierarchy and dominance incorporated into the old ceremonies. In Figure VI-3 we summarize the practical religious meanings attached to the Tuladhar life cycle rituals.

Many modern Uray Newars have come to see that their traditions are what makes them distinctive so that this motivates conscious efforts at asserting their identity through performing the saṃskāras.<sup>1</sup> The lack of a strong Vajrācārya presence in articulating the Vajrayāna meanings incorporated into these traditions helps explain the loss of many distinctly Buddhist customs. Where the Vajrācāryas retain the strongest hold is in the realm of managing death.

In our description of the Tuladhar after-death observances, we have noted the elaborate attention focused on the dead and the extended duration of these ceremonies. We must add several summary

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<sup>1</sup>This modern spirit does not prevent pruning off "blind superstitions" in the process.

Figure VI-4: Summary of the Religious Meanings in the Lay Buddhist Samskaras

<u>Samskara</u>	<u>Practical Religious Meaning(s)</u>	<u>Buddhist Meaning(s)</u>
Macā Bu Byenke	Release from birth pollution Protection of the baby	Harati Ajima converted by the Buddha
Macā Janko	Name given Protection of the baby Personhood established with the introduction of food and clothes	Vajrayāna power in carrying out the rituals
Ihi	Purification Partial ritual maturity	Symbolism of bodhicitta; Girl becomes <u>Kumārī</u> , personification of <u>prajñā</u>
Baran Cwanegu	Full ritual maturity Protection and purification Prevents painful menstrual periods	Marriage to Sun, identified as a Bodhisattva
Keitha Pūjā	Ritual adulthood	Shakyamuni's departure from home; Vajrayana powers of protection
Marriage	Protection Commensual relations Woman's entrance to family cults	Buddhist deities witness rituals Worship of Bijesvarī Joginī seals the marriage
Buda Janko	Protection Longevity and Vitality	Making <u>punya</u> Rebirth in Sukhāvati Assistance in intermediate state between births
Śrāddha	Protection from evil spirit Purification of house and <u>phuki</u>	Averts a bad destiny Rebirth in Sukhāvati

remarks regarding these practices.

First, the thirteen-day period after a death is a grueling period for the bereaved. The confinement to the house, the limitations on socializing, the dietary restrictions, and the ritual lamentations all lead the family to confront the fact of death fully and immerse itself in it. Through the metaphor of death pollution as a physical presence, Tuladhars slowly exorcise their homes and themselves of death's presence so that Du Byenke and the gradual return to social relations comes as a relief. Similarly, the Chief Mourner's monthly head-shaving effectively changes his lifestyle, altering his sensory experience as well as his physical appearance. In many ways, Newar tradition programs every individual in the family to reach an unavoidable focus on the deceased. We have noted that the Tuladhars have only a very rudimentary understanding of the Vajrācāryas' rituals. Regardless of this limitation in the case of śrāddha, it is clear that the ritual orchestration of the mourning channels grief effectively, molding it to the service of Buddhist tradition and the patrilineal family.

Second, the death of a parent also leads the Tuladhars to seriously consider, perhaps for the first time, the fact of mortality and their Buddhist tradition's doctrines explaining human life. We have noted that performing death and mourning rituals according to prescribed tradition is enforced very strongly. In the midst of taking on the role of chief mourner and, for the younger individuals, having to be the family's chief ritual performer for the first time, they are often pressed to decide what they believe. In this way, death leads individuals back into the tradition and its doctrines. At

this critical existential point, Newar tradition leads its members back into its circle of devotion and meaning. It does this by encouraging mourners to suspend the normal patterns of life, do pūjās, and make pilgrimages to major religious complexes.

Finally, we must see that for the Tuladhars, mourning tradition is founded on the indeterminacy of karma and the uncertainty of the dead one's karmic destiny. The rituals and other activities all seek to avert a bad destiny and make punya to insure a good future for the departed. Because no one can say for sure, vast time and energy are spent on the śrāddha rituals. Alongside the Buddhist doctrine of karma, the Vajrācāryas maintain the necessity of these rituals that provide a great inflow of donations to themselves giving assurances that the departed will reach pitṛlok if all of the rituals are done well and the requisite offerings are made. Thus, Newar Buddhist tradition plays on both sides of the Indian question of whether one's destiny is based upon the karma of past lifetimes, or whether rituals can over-rule this and manipulate the rebirth destiny (Edgerton 1927). It is clear that for traditions that subscribe to the doctrines of a cosmos governed by karmic law and rebirth, death is the critical time for karma to operate. It is not surprising that a very highly ritualized tradition such as the Newars' would apply its ritual expertise to this time as well.

CHAPTER VII  
The Newar Buddhist Festival Year in Kathmandu

Festivals are the times when groups alter the normal flow of productive life to join with kin and friends in making devotional offerings, viewing public displays and processions, and feasting. Except for Mohini and Saunti, festivals do not usually shut down the marketplace; but the merchants do curtail the normal flow of commerce and on this level, the many festivals create a break with the normal schedule of life.

The number of festivals in the Newar tradition is most remarkable. The Tuladhars themselves often comment, sometimes with fatigue, on the ubiquity of their religious obligations and the regular necessity of arranging for the rituals and feasts specified by their tradition.<sup>1</sup> Although most point out that the extent and quality of festival observance has declined considerably in recent times, they still remain a major source of entertainment, the main time for kin gatherings, and the chief occasion for devotional activity.

The order of presentation here begins with a discussion of the Newar calendar and the diachronic observances the follow the lunar cycle. We then follow the festival year from the Tuladhar point of view starting with Ganthan Muga. For the purposes of organization and

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<sup>1</sup>A saying in Nepali also makes this point:

Bahun bigriyo lobbhle,  
Chetri bigriyo mojhle,  
Newar bigriyo bhojle.

"The Brahman is ruined by greed,  
The Chetri is ruined by pleasures,  
And the Newar is ruined by feasting."

clarity, we have included a graphic presentation of the 1981-1982 festival year to supplement the discussion. On this map, we also indicate other processions through Asan Tol which are not all discussed in the text.

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### The Religious Calendar

Officially, Nepal follows the pūrnimāta calendar system followed in northern India, with its new year beginning on the bright fortnight of Chaitra. The still recorded Newar tradition (Nepā Samvat) has its New Year in Kartik.<sup>1</sup>

The average Tuladhar in Asan Tol carries a pocket calendar with him that shows three calendrical systems at once: the lunar, "tithi", the solar, "gate", and the western, "tarik". The lunar defines the characteristic of the day according to the lunar cycle; the solar calendar sets the division of solar months; tārik links the traditional calendar with the western world. The first two appear in devanāgarī script, the last, in arabic numerals. Even for the Newars, the union of these three measures of time is often confusing. The only regular feature of this calendrical system is the succession of weekdays and of solar months (Das 1928). These, too, are printed in the pocket calendar.

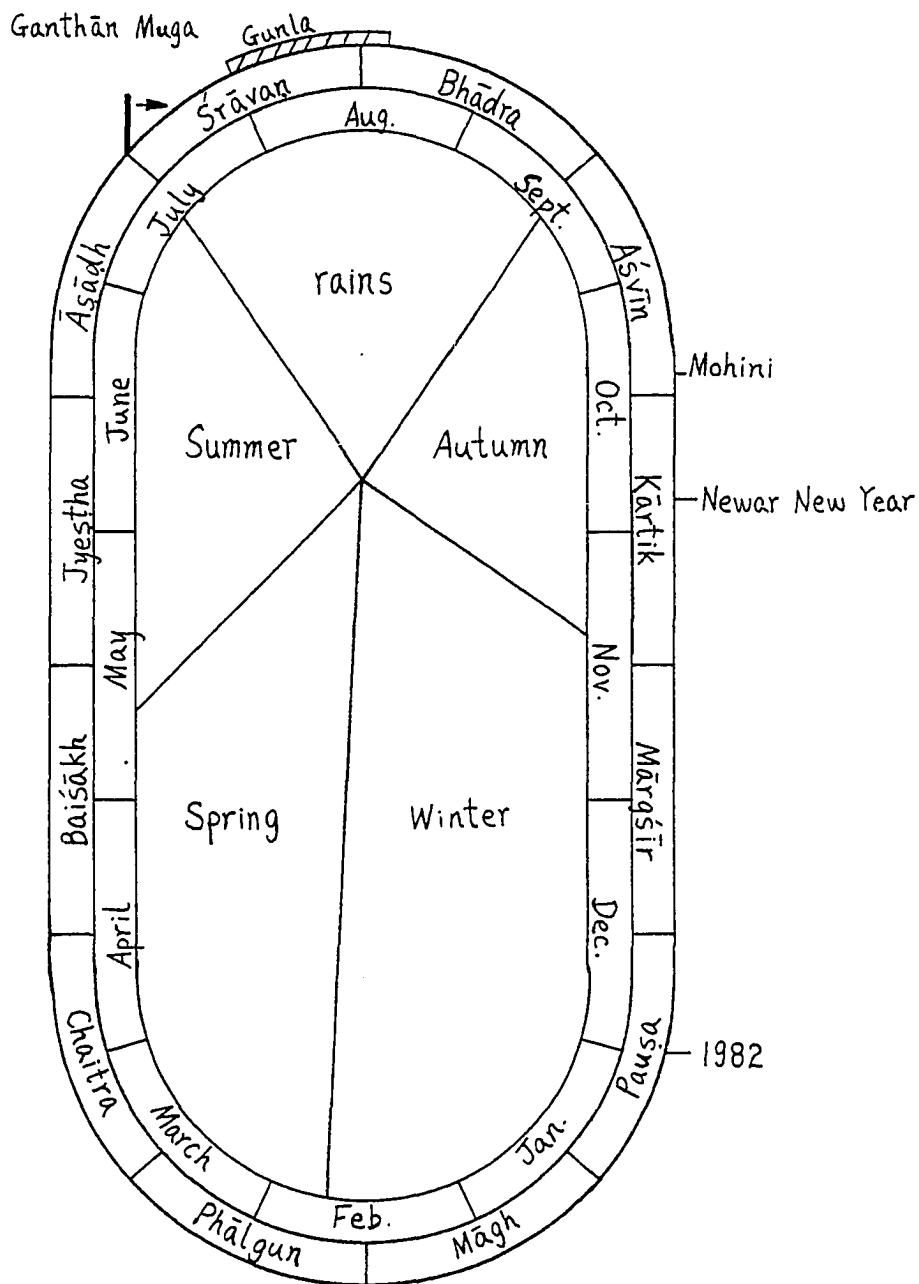
The year is worked out years in advance by appointed government

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<sup>1</sup>This system, still recognized in parts of Panjab (Freed and Freed 1964) and Uttar Pradesh (Campbell 1976), is also an old Indian model.



Figure VII-1: The Solar Months



astrologers who follow the patterns decided by their Indian counterparts. This "official" version of the year, however, is subject to controversy: during my research; there were several disputes over when the day of a given festival should begin. As in many other cases, Newar culture follows the pattern derived from Indian culture, but with its own unique innovations and local interpretations.

### The Lunar Month

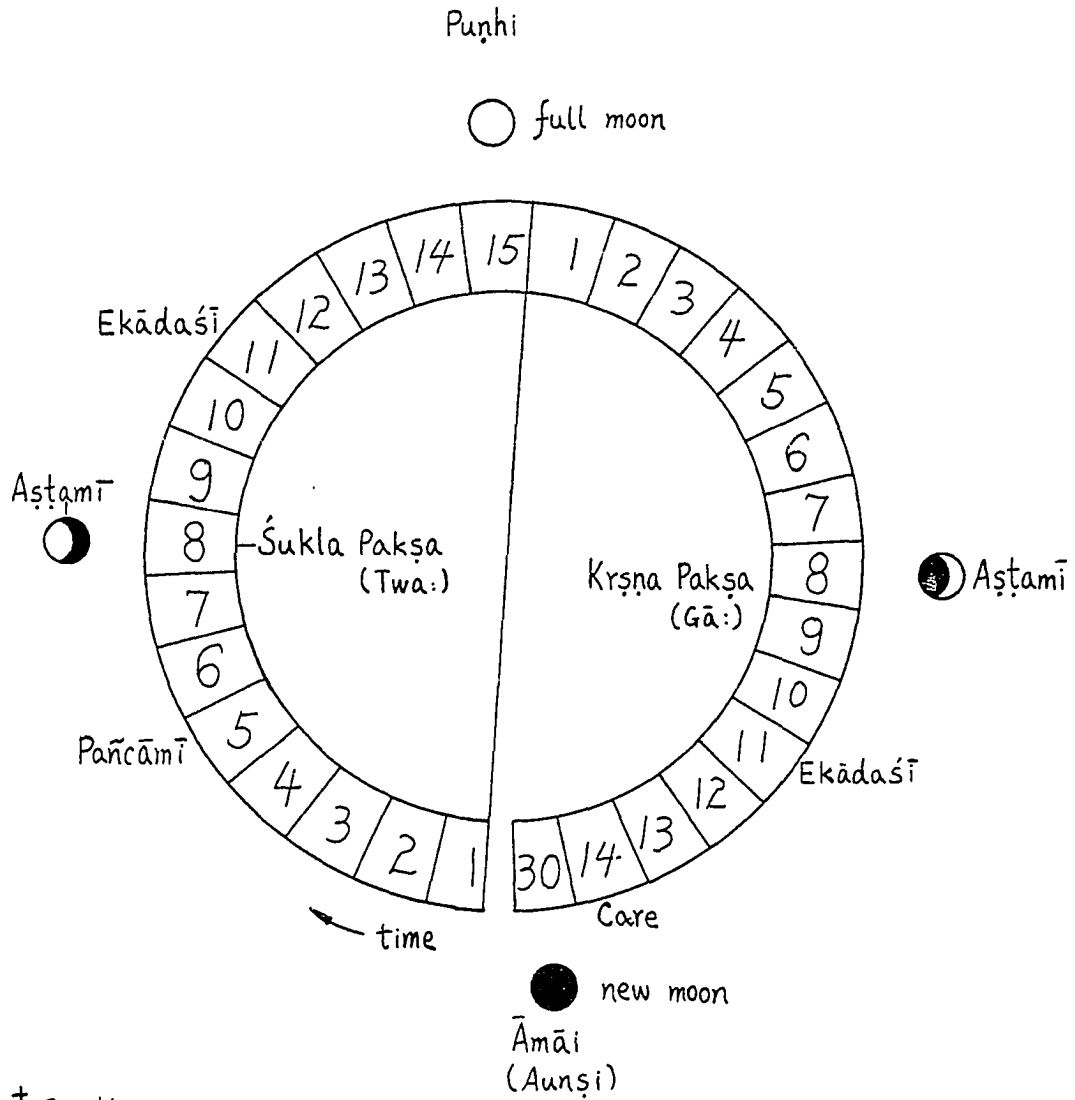
The tithi system is worked out to follow the cycles of the moon. This is an essential matter for deciding when to begin the festivals or initiate a family ritual. Almost every special event in Newar culture has its proper moment set according to the solar month and lunar time. Because the lunar year does not add up to the sum of days taken to complete a single solar cycle of 365 days, the two systems must be adjusted regularly. Two correctives are made: single days are added to the months; and about every three years an entire month must be inserted (Freed and Freed 1964: 80).<sup>1</sup> Because of the variance in this system, it is impossible to anchor events in the solar months of either the gate or western calendars. Individuals must specify festivals according to the exact lunar day of a solar month for that year ("e.g. the aṣṭamī day of the bright fortnight of Sravan").

The lunar month is reckoned to start on the first day after the new moon. It proceeds through the waxing stages of the śukla pakṣa

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<sup>1</sup>This is an inauspicious month for all rituals, for couples to be together, and for a woman to conceive. Laymen may do special rituals to ward off potential evil influences and both Hindu and Buddhist storytellers are often called upon to perform at this time.

Figure VII-2: The Lunar Month Cycle (Tithi)



+ Sañihū  
Special day once each  
month at start of a  
new solar month

(New: thva:)<sup>1</sup> or bright, half month, that culminates in the full moon which is called "puṇhi" in colloquial Newari. (The proper Sanskrit term is Pūrṇimā.) Puṇhi is the most auspicious day for religious observances so that each one has its own festival. Both Hindu and Buddhist Newars are most likely to choose puṇhi for any special household pūjās or individual observances. For example, if a Tuladhar visits Svayambhū only once each month, it will most likely be on puṇhi. Likewise, the families around Dagu Bahā light the lamps on the Asok Chaitya on this day every month.

The krishna pakṣa (New: ga:), or waning fortnight, begins on the day after puṇhi and ends on Āmāi, the new moon. Some individuals do make special offerings according to this day.

In both the sukla and krishna pakṣa of each lunar month, the two eighth days, aṣṭamī, are important, especially for the Buddhist Newars. As we have seen, the most popular brata for worshipping Avalokitesvara, dalan danegu, must be held on aṣṭamī. Many groups choose this day for special pūjās at Svayambhū and other Buddhist shrines. Hindus also make special pūjā programs on aṣṭamī, but their next most important day, especially for Vaishnava devotees, is ekādaśī, the eleventh day of each fortnight. Buddhist Newars almost never choose Ekādaśī for special observances.

Finally, the day before the new moon, ca:re (Skt: Caturdaśī), is occasionally a festival day for both groups. It is usually chosen as the time to worship the fierce deities of the pantheon. For example,

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<sup>1</sup>Though these names are found in Newari, they are no longer in active usage. It is significant that the Nepali/Sanskrit terms have come into exclusive parlance.

Tuladhars must perform the brata to mahankal on ca:re.

The only special day of the solar cycle is called saṇlhu in Newari (Skt: Sankranti). Some guthi groups choose this as the day for their regular group activities.

We summarize the Hindu-Buddhist pattern of lunar observances in the following table:

Figure VII-3: Patterns in the Hindu-Buddhist Use of the Lunar Calendar Days for Festival Observances

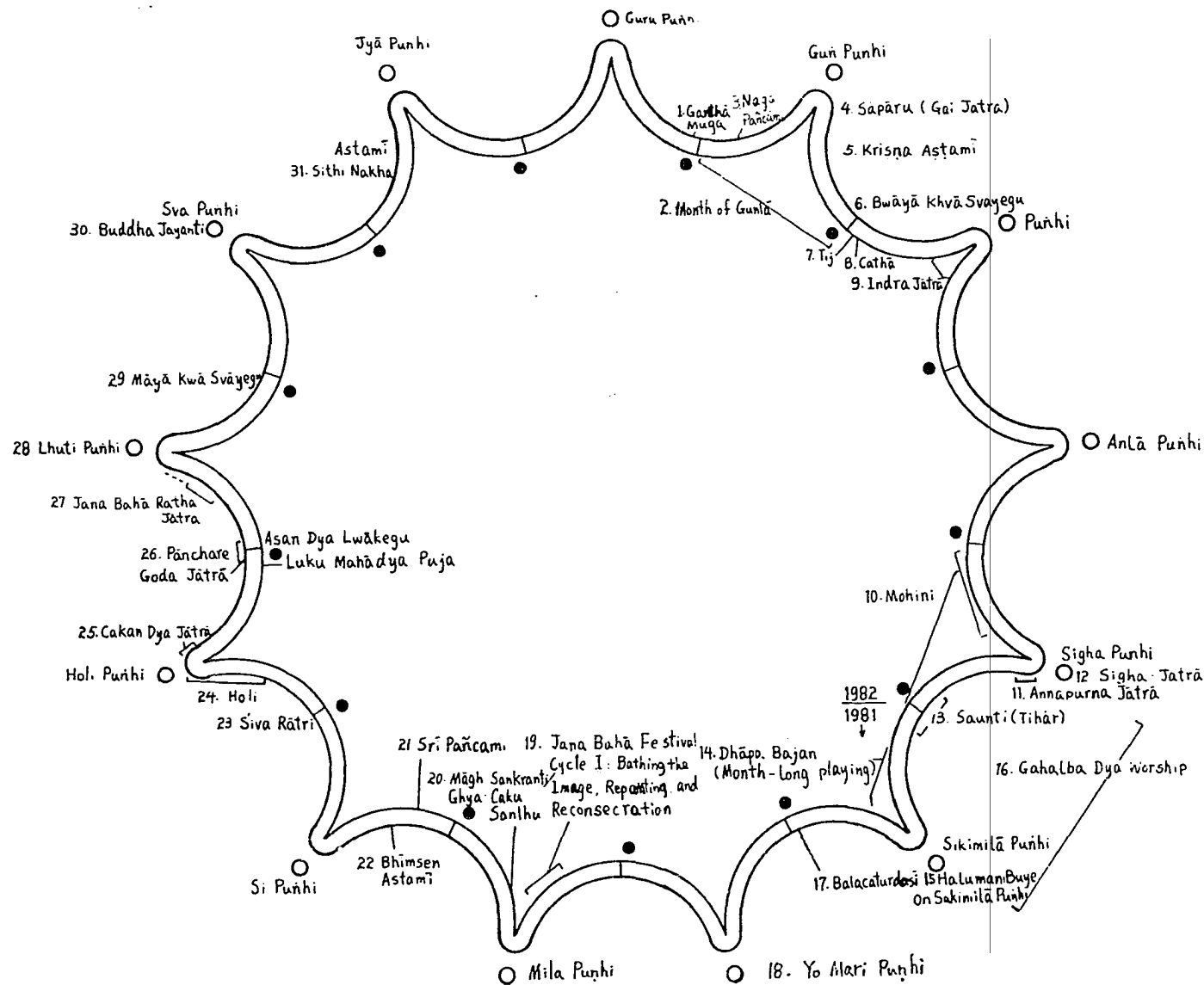
	BUDDHIST	HINDU
Punhi --	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX
Aṣṭamī --	XXXXXXXXXXXX	//////////
Ekādaśī--	~ ~ ~ ~ ~	XXXXXXXXXXXX
Ca:re --	//////////	//////////
Āmāi --	//////////	//////////
Saṇlhū --	//////////	//////////

XXXX= Regular and Major activity

////= Regular and Minor activity

~~~~= No activity

-----|\*\*\*|-----



### The Festival Year

The progression through the entire year of Newar festivals is indicated in Figure VII-4 above, showing the lunar cycles and indicating the most important observances in the Buddhist cultural life of Asan Tol. As we move through the description of the festivals, we will also include two-month figures to help the reader follow the extensive program of yearly observances.

#### 1. GANTHAÑ MUGA

At the start of the rice planting season, the cultivators perform pūjās to drive all of the evil spirits from the fields. On Ganthañ Muga, these spirits are expelled from the settlements to which they may have fled, thus marking the end of the season for rice planting. Newars consider Ganthañ Muga to be the start of the new round of yearly festivals which suggests that the agricultural rhythms were the basis for organizing the festival year, a pattern we will note again.

At many crossroads in town, residents erect bamboo stands and decorate them with the face of a demon called "Ganthañ Muga" or "Ganthañ Karna". Families can attach cloth pieces or offerings from their houses to attract any evil spirits away from their midst. Sometimes paintings of a phallus are added to the bamboo stand as well.

The performance of Ganthañ Muga is in the hands of the low caste chamkala sweepers. A male youth from their community has the words "Ganthañ Muga", "Penis" or other obscene words painted on his body



Plate 86: A Chamkala  
Boy as Ganthan Muga  
Solicits Donations



Plate 87: Crossroads  
Stands for Ganthan Muga--



with black color. He wanders through the market with a band of followers, begging for donations from the shopkeepers to pay for the bamboo stand and his services.

At sunset, a crowd assembles at the crossroads. The bamboo is set afire just as the youth who sits atop the bundle is brusquely pulled through the streets to a pītha site outside the old town boundaries. "Ganthan Karna" then flees into the night.

In 1981, there were three different groups who performed this ceremony in greater Asan. About five years ago, the center area dominated by the Tuladhar shops stopped having its own version of this performance.

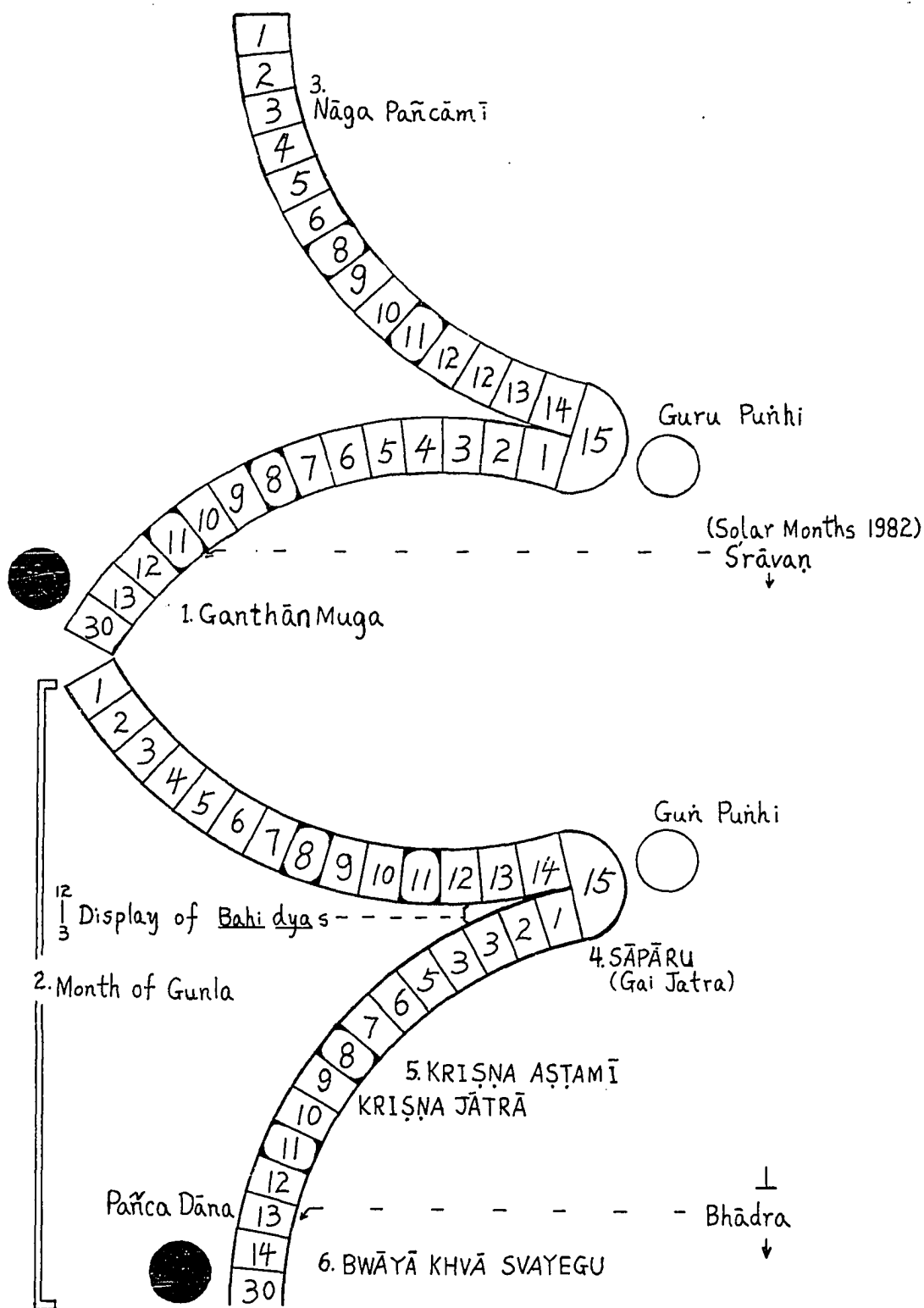
Regardless of their involvement with the processions, every Asan household also performs rituals to expell the evil spirits from their midst. After the women sweep the house, the male thākali makes special offerings appropriate for bhūts, pretas, and other spirits--broken rice, animal intestines, liquor. These are then put into a clay bowl and left outside on the nearest streetcorner. Once this is carried out and the person returns to the confines of the house, the men hammer new iron nails into the main entranceway lintel and stoop.<sup>1</sup> Individuals may also wear iron rings to utilize the spirit-repelling quality of this metal. After these actions are finished, no one may leave the house until the next day and no outsiders are permitted entry.

Ganthan Muga is the day when the black magicians are thought to be active at the ghats and at shrines to deities thought to be

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<sup>1</sup> Some families add these nails to all room lintels.

**FIGURE VII-5: SECTION OF THE FESTIVAL YEAR:**  
Gantha Muga to Baya Kwā Svayegu



connected with their arts. Tuladhars share a common fear of going near these places on this evening.

## 2. GUNLA: THE SACRED MONTH OF NEWAR BUDDHISTS<sup>1</sup>

Named after the ninth (gu) Newari month (la), Gunla is the period of the most intensive religious activity in the Buddhist community. According to Newar Buddhist tradition, the punhi of Gunla commemorates the day Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment and defeated Mara.

Throughout the southern Buddhist world, a period of retreat during the monsoon rain season, in Pali called vassavasa (Dutt 1962: 54), is a yearly observance. This traditional practice dating from the Buddha's time curtails monks' mobility outside the monastery and encourages meditation and study for its duration of three months. Although we discovered no connection with vassavasa, the activities in the Buddhist communities during Gunla, the time of year, and the Panca Dan custom (discussed below) supports the supposition that some historical connection must exist.

Because of the importance of Gunla for the Newar Buddhists, we will devote considerable attention to it here.

### MONTH-LONG ACTIVITIES

#### At Bahās In Town

The members of a few large bahās still recite Buddhist texts each day during Guṇlā. Some may still read the entire Nava Grantha, "the

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<sup>1</sup>During this month, two major Hindu festivals are also held; they will be discussed below.

Nine Tomes" of Newar Buddhist Tradition.<sup>1</sup> Several generations ago, individuals would retreat to a bahā for the entire period to meditate, study, and fast (Locke 1980: 235). Asan Tuladhar elders also mentioned to me that month-long lecture series were once common at important bahās in Kathmandu. In my experience, only one such series was done during Guṇḷa.

### Guṇḷā Bājan

As we have already seen, membership in the Guṇḷā Bājan is one criterion of membership in the Tuladhar caste. Once a young man has completed the keitha pūjā saṃskāra, he is eligible to participate. Within this community, leadership of the bājan's devotional activities rotates through twelve sub-groups. Every year, then, a new senior leader (Pālā) with his sub-leaders, who are also referred to as Pālās, are in charge of the actual performance of the Tuladhar devotions, both during Guṇḷā and for the other activities during the year.

The bājan is best defined as a "music playing group". During Guṇḷā, Tuladhars play two kinds of portable drums, the nhaykincha and the Dhā:, and two kinds of cymbals, the tā: and the chusya. In modern times, the bājan has come to employ low-caste Damai musicians who play the melody lines using instruments recently imported from the west via India: clarinets and trumpets.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>On these texts in the Newar Buddhist tradition, see Chapter VIII.

<sup>2</sup>Informants stated that Tuladhars never played the flute or other wind instruments because these connote low caste status; they used to employ Jyāpus, who still play a variety of flutes and maintain many old musical traditions.



Plate 88: Drums and  
Cymbals of the Guṇlā  
Bājan



Plate 89: Guṇlā Bājan in Procession

The ability to play the drums and cymbals is one way to define a culturally accomplished Tuladhar man. The performance of the bājan likewise reflects upon the status of the caste and Tol. Mastery of the tā: cymbals, which lead the bājan's playing, is the area of highest musical expertise for the tā: player signals the other musicians and leads the orchestra in playing together.

The bājan's religious purpose is to add a musical component to processions.<sup>1</sup> During Guṇlā, this movement is to Svayambhū and back daily, and on several other excursions discussed below.

The yearly schedule of Guṇlā activities actually begins before the month commences. For up to a whole month beforehand, the Pālās organize instructional classes for younger members.<sup>2</sup>

Several days before the start of Guṇlā, the group employs the

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<sup>1</sup>This type of Buddhist devotionism, the offering of pleasant sound to the deities, is advocated in the Saddharma Puṇḍharīka, one of the Nava Grantha of the Baha Buddhist tradition:

If any persons, in stupas and mausoleums,  
To jeweled images and painted images  
With flowered and perfumed banners and canopies  
And with deferential thoughts make offerings,  
Or if they cause others to make music,  
Beating drums and blowing horns and conchs,  
Or sounding flutes, of many reeds or of only one,  
And lutes and cymbals  
Producing many fine sounds like these  
And holding them up as offerings;  
Or if with joyful thought  
They sing hymns of praise to the excellences of the Buddha  
Producing so much as a tiny sound,  
They have achieved the Buddha path.

(Murvitz 1976: 39-40)

<sup>2</sup>Depending upon the stewardship of the year's pālās, these classes vary in length and in the zealotness of recruitment. In 1981, for example, the Pālās also paid the Damai musicians to come and learn the songs well. Moreover, at the end of Guṇlā, they gave certificates to the best young drummer.

seniormost Vajrācārya from the Tol to perform a pūjā to Nāṣa dya, the deity who must be worshipped before devotional playing of any sort can officially begin. The bājan then proceeds to the Pālā's house where all take prasād from the pūjā and are then served a snack of beaten rice, meat, and other vegetables, plus āyla, "distilled spirits."

A standard day for the Bājan during Guṇlā goes as follows:

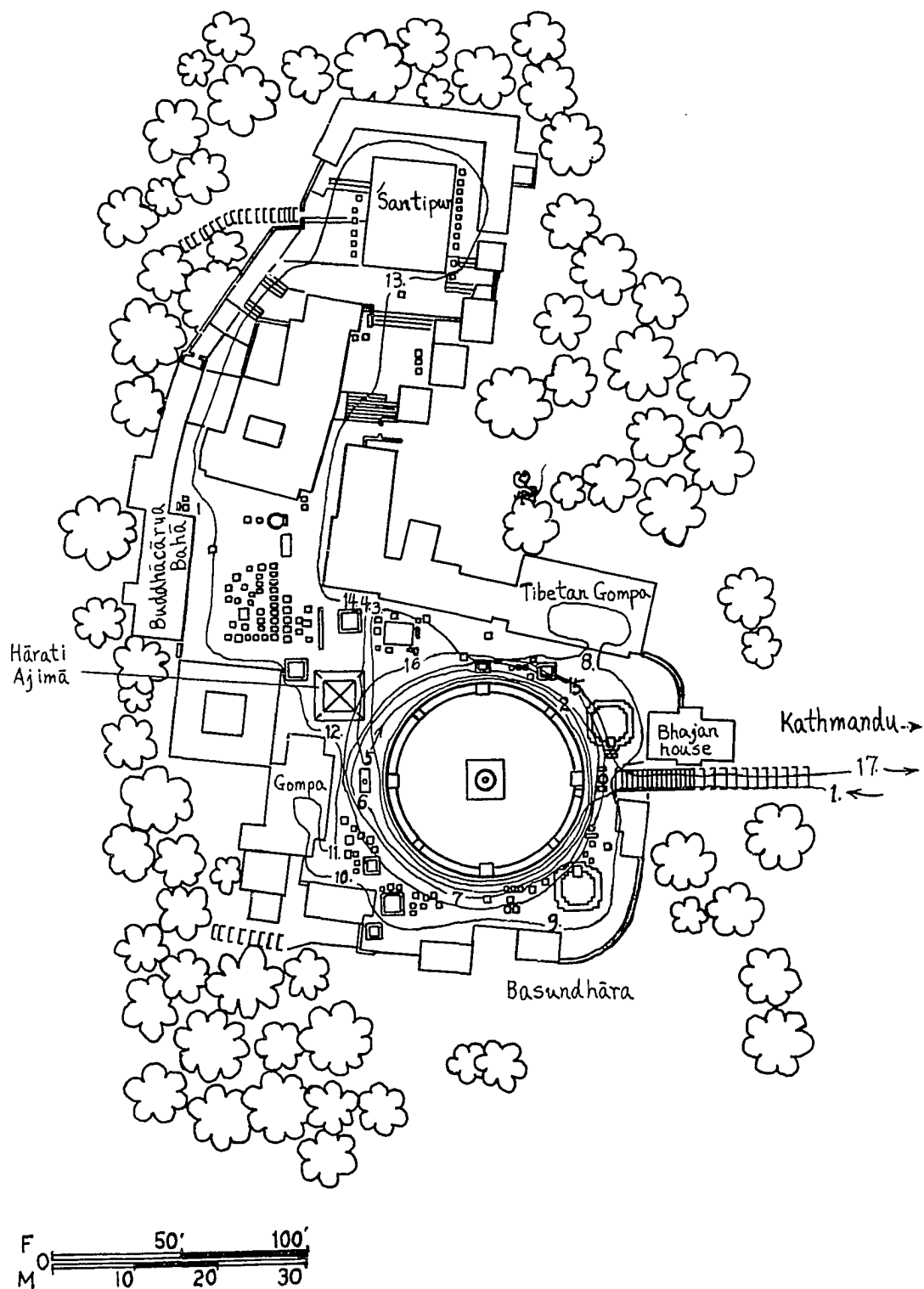
On the first day of Guṇlā and for each of the next thirty or so days of the month, bājan drummers leave Asan just after sunrise and proceed directly to the Svayambhū hilltop.<sup>1</sup> (1) Once they reach the stupa, they go around it once in pradakṣiṇā. (2) After this, the group sets up at a traditional site just north of the Amitabha niche. (3) Other Tuladhars who left Asan after the bājan arrive for the next half hour. The Pālās also arrange for the delivery of the extra drums, usually by employing a Jyāpu to carry them up and some stand around and talk, others make private devotional rounds, some may practice drumming. At a publicized time, a group-gathering drumbeat is played on the nhaykincha, (4) and the head Pālā takes role to insure that all of the year's Pālā-committee households are represented. By this time, the Damaīs have appeared and the bājan's daily panchopacāra pūjā, prepared by the Pālā committee, is distributed among those present for them to offer during the group's procession around the hilltop shrines.

The pradakṣiṇā begins by all present standing before the Amitabha shrine on the western side of the stupa. (5) As the main pūjā plate is presented to the shrine attendant, the group stands, hands in "namaste", and sings one or more alternative Mahāyāna

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<sup>1</sup>This description is of a typical day in 1981; in this as in many other devotional activities among the Tuladhars, the individuals involved have a great range of acceptable alternatives they can introduce. Minor variations from this description can and do occur. The numbers in parentheses correspond to the map on the following page.

MAP VII-1: The Route of the Guṇlā Bājan at Svayambhū





Dasa Bala Stotra, the Sapta Pāramitā Stotra, or the Bandeśrī Stotra.<sup>1</sup> Once the pūjā plate is returned, the group follows a route that completes a double pradakṣiṇā of the stupa (6,7) and then visits, in a clockwise order, all of the important shrines on the hilltop including: the Kargyu Tibetan gompa (8), Basundhāra (9), the "Sikkimese gompa" (10-11), Harati Ajimā (12), and Santipur (13). When this cycle is complete and after a short rest, the Tuladhars again take up the drums and cymbals, play the assembly drumbeat and then the prime song of the Guṇlā Bājan called "Bhāgawan Gwara". (14) On a good day, the group will have swelled to sixty or seventy with more late arrivals for the final pradakṣiṇā of the stupa and the descent down the main stairs.<sup>2</sup> (15,16,17)

On the way down and back to town, the group is careful to move in a clockwise manner around any shrine or stupa it passes. The old tradition specifies that different music be played at different points along the route, but this is usually not followed anymore. A key stop on the way back is at Bijesvari, where the bājan pauses for darśan. Some of the eldest old men of the community meet the bājan here and the final group attendance record is noted. After crossing the river, the bājan proceeds to Jana Bahā for pradakṣiṇā, exits around the Kel Tol Ajimā temple outside, then goes around the three main temples in central Asan. To complete the procession, the group proceeds to Asan Bahā for a pradakṣiṇā of the tall Asok Chaitya there, navigates the alleys for a darshan of Māṣa dya outside Ta Che Bahā, then returns to the Pālā's house where it plays a closing drumbeat. The Pālā takes the drums for safekeeping and the bājan's daily round is complete.

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<sup>1</sup>These are given in the Bauddha Stotra Samgraha, pgs. 2-6, 26, and 27 respectively (Anonymous nd.).

<sup>2</sup>The increased availability of cheap public transport (taxis and three wheeled "tempos") has made it easier for the elderly Tuladhars to get to Svayambhū and accompany the bājan back.

The Guṇlā Bājan provides a rich and satisfying devotional channel for Tuladhars who value the old musical traditions. As mentioned previously, attendance for men whose households are not Palas is optional. In fact, a group of non-obligated regulars seem to come As mentioned with the Palas each year. Although the average size of the bājan is said to have declined recently, we estimated in our surveys that over 60% of the adult male population comes with the bājan at least three times each year. Young men are still very much in attendance at bājan events, some out of interest in the music, but more commonly, as the representative of their household delegated to fulfill the Pālā obligation.

The niśla cāyegu feast held at bui khya, the field at the foot of Svayambhū, is organized by the Guṇlā Bājan. It is the one occasion each year when all of the Asan Tuladhars feast together. This and Bahi Dya Swayegu (see below) are the two occasions when the Asan Tuladhar community meets together on a large scale so that the harmonies and disharmonies active in the wider community often are played out simultaneously with the other levels of activity.<sup>1</sup> The relative harmony of the bājan literally reflects the state of internal unity within the group.

#### Tuta: Bwanegu

In Jana Bahā, Asan Bahā, and in Tuladhar courtyards where there are guthis for this purpose, small groups of men gather daily to chant religious texts (tūta; Skt. stotra). The most common one chosen is

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<sup>1</sup>An additional feast that once was held by the bājan after Guṇlā was discontinued over twenty years ago.

the Nāmasangīti.

To accomodate those who go to Svayambhū individually or with the bājan, the tūta bwanegu begins about the time the bājan returns to Asan, i.e. about 7 AM, or else is done in the evenings. This form of activity has declined precipitously over the last two decades, say informants and we found only four active in 1981.

### Devotions in Homes

Another practice that has similiarly fallen off in recent times is calling the family Vajrācārya into Tuladhar homes for the daily reading of private Buddhist texts. The families pay the Vajrācārya a daily stipend and then make a special offering at the end of the month. Every text in family's collection was formerly read yearly during Guñlā. Where texts are still read in Tuladhar homes, it is a mechanical ritual since neither the Vajrācārya readers nor the laymen can understand the meanings.

Some Tuladhars still try to follow the traditional practice of making special efforts to meditate and/or study during Guñlā. (20% of the Tuladhars in my survey mentioned such efforts in 1981.)

A third type of special observance is abstention from different foods which is sealed by a vow at the beginning of the month. Tuladhar laymen may choose to avoid meat, onions, garlic, and/or alcohol for the entire month. Informants report that there once was a tradition of individuals fasting totally for the entire month but I saw no evidence of this practice.

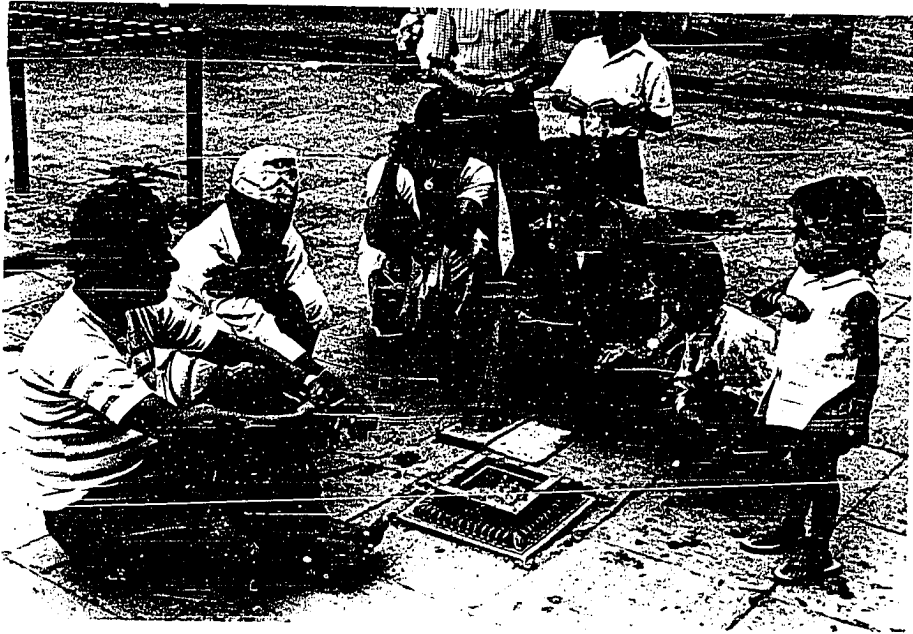


Plate 90: Guñlā: Tūta Bwanegu



Plate 91: Guñlā: Dya Thāyegu

### Dya Thāyegu

A special Gunla activity in Tuladhar households is making small chaityas out of black clay, a practice called Dya Thāyegu. This is usually done by small guthis set up for this purpose. The goal is for the household to make a large number of clay chaityas and Buddhist deities, ideally numbering 100,000.

After a purificatory ritual for the family at the start of the month (which may involve the abstention from meat and alcohol), individuals sit together each morning to make as many images as they can using special molds. Women are usually the most active in dya thāyegu; this makes sense as they do not participate in the bājan. (Menstruating women, however, must abstain from this task.)

To make an individual image according to the highest standards (known only to Urāy, Sākyas, and Vajrācāryas) entails a twelve-step process marked at each turn by a mantra recitation.<sup>1</sup> Each image also gets a grain of rice that gives jīva ("life") to it.

At the end of the month, the sum of clay images is molded into

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<sup>1</sup>The steps are given here with the accompanying mantras:

1. Om Basudhe Svaha , taking the clay;
2. Om Vajra Bhavay Svaha , shaping the clay;
3. Om Arje Viraje Svaha , putting oil in the mold;
4. Om Vajra Dhatu Garbhe Svaha , putting the clay in the mold;
5. Om Vajra Kirti Chedaya Hum Phat Svaha , removing the excess clay;
6. Om Dharma Dhatu Garbhe Svaha , putting in a paddy grain;
7. Om Vajra Mungaratko Hum Phat Svaha , covering up the paddy grain;
8. Om Vajra Dharma Rate Svaha , putting on extra clay to remove the image ;
9. Om Supratisthata Vajre Svaha , putting the image with others already made;
10. Om Mani Sata Dipte Svaha , after placing it.

one giant three-dimensional maṇḍala and worshipped by the family with a kalash pūjā performed by a Vajrācārya guruju. The entire mass with the offerings is finally dumped into the Vishnumati river, along with offerings to the nāgas.

### Courtyard Devotions

Families light the lamps around the Asok Chaitya of Dagu Bahā every night during this month. Although the wealthiest neighbors were the most active, every family usually contributed oil to the wick lamps there. On the main days of the lunar month, the lamps were also lit in the mornings as well. During Guṇlā, family offerings to the Bahā kwāpā dya were more elaborate and individuals made a greater point than at other times in the year to do pradakṣiṇā of the chaitya complex in the courtyard.

### Special Vajrācārya Services for Laymen

Throughout Guṇlā, many Vajrācārya priests go to Jana Bahā, Svayambhū, and Si ga: to read sūtras. They most often read from texts that confer protection (e.g., the Pañca Rakshā) and, at a layman's request, chant protective mantras for him which are sealed by his touching the text to the layman's head. For this service he receives a small payment in money and/or rice.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This practice is also followed on the main lunar days throughout the year; during Guṇlā, large numbers perform this service on a daily basis.

SPECIAL EVENTS DURING GUṆLĀ

Bahi Dya Buyegu wa Svayegu:

"Display and Visitation of the Bahi Dyas"

For five days in the middle of Guṇlā, the owners of Samyak images (in most cases, Dipankara Buddha) display them in public, usually in the ground floor area of their houses. The Sanghas of some bahās display images and art that they own. In some places they also display long scroll paintings that illustrate the central stories emphasized by Newar tradition.<sup>1</sup>

In several bahās, Vajrācāryas offer a darśan of gold-lettered Prajñā Pāramitā texts. This viewing is supposed to confer health and protection and laymen are required to make an offering to the attendants for this privilege.

This period of display is the time when Newar Buddhists display many of their non-secret religious treasures in what was once the greatest yearly Buddhist display. These "cultural performances", to use Singer's apt phrase (1972: 70), invariably draw large crowds throughout the display.

Although over twenty Asan households own Samyak images, in 1981 only four still displayed them in public for Bahi Dya Buyegu in 1981. The images are now simply arranged upstairs where only family members can enjoy them and make offerings. Owners who elect not to

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<sup>1</sup>None of these are displayed in Asan, but the following four scrolls are displayed at bahās visited by the Guṇlā bājan:

1. Singhasatabahu in Bhāgawan Bahā, Thamel
2. Story of Kes Chandra in Itum Bahā (stolen in 1980)
3. Mahāsattva Raj Kumar, Naradevi courtyard
4. Tanka of Buddhist Hells in Si ga: Bahā

Plate 92: Guñlā: Bahi Dya Display



Plate 93: Guñlā: Tuladhars Going on Bahi Dya Svayegu Outing



display their images cited fear of thievery as the main deterrent. The few who still put out their Bahi Dyas recount attempted robberies and the actual loss of many ornaments and smaller objects.<sup>1</sup>

Even with the vast reduction in scale, Bahi Dya Buyegu provides an opportunity for the Asan Buddhist community to experience the grandeur of its highest art traditions and recognize the prestige of its greatest lay patrons. This tradition is also a clear example of merchants upholding Buddhist tradition and holding the tradition together through their wealth.

#### Bahi Dya Svayegu

Bahi Dya Swayegu is the day-long procession by the Guṇlā Bājan that visits many of the displayed Bahi Dyas in uptown, midtown, and downtown Kathmandu.

The visitation starts during the morning return from Svayambhu when the bājan visits the bahās in the far uptown: Bhāgawan Bahā, Chusya Bahā, Musya Bahā, Si ga:, Nhu Bahā, Jana Bāha. Although the morning return usually draws more participants than a regular day during Guṇlā (1981: 45), it is the afternoon-evening procession that draws the larger crowd (1981: 250), the maximum number of Tuladhar

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<sup>1</sup> In this domain, contact with the west in the domain of international art networks has had a clear detrimental effect on Newar Buddhist culture. Images and paintings must be locked away from the devotees so that actual physical contact is not possible. The "security provisions" that local groups have put in place to safeguard temple art from thieves have often distorted the original architectural-artistic order of the shrines. The temptation for the acting Pālās to sell off guthi art has been another manifestation of this problem. As we will argue in Chapter VIII, display is a fundamental mechanism of cultural transmission, and thievery has seriously undermined this in the Kathmandu Valley.

drummers (1981: 10), and the most hired Damai musicians (1981: 3 trumpets, 2 clarinets). The only women who come along are very small girls brought by their fathers and grandfathers. During this five hour procession, the group visited about 25 different bahās, stopping approximately midway for a Pālā-coordinated snack (beaten rice, sweets, spirits).

The procession is the time when the Tuladhars join en masse to have darshan of and worship the greatest treasures of their cumulative Buddhist tradition. The Bahi Dya Swayegu procession is also the time when the very best drummers come out and play.

Informants related that in recent years the bājan has greatly forshortened its itinerary and that there is a diminished display compared to the recent past.

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### Pañca Dān

Each year on the thirteenth day of the krishna paksha of Guñlā, all but the poorest Buddhist laymen open their storerooms and engage their kitchens for the purpose of making offerings to Vajrācārya priests who come to their houses. Vajrācāryas from Patan also come to Kathmandu as their town's Pañca Dān day is held several weeks earlier.

On Pañca Dān, the streetlife swells a bit more than usual as Vajrācāryas bearing bags for offerings make their way from house to house. Individuals do so either on an individual basis or for their entire bahā. (If the latter, they must carry a large brass bowl.) Laymen usually give five measures of paddy for group collections and two to individuals.

There are a number of small guṭhis in Asan whose endowment is for the purpose of making paddy offerings to the guruḥ. One guthiyār stays in a storefront, or in a resthouse--often decorated with Buddhist paintings or images--to give paddy to any Vajrācārya who appears.

In courtyards where Buddhists live (such as Dagu Bahā), the walls outside the houses are decorated with paintings hung from the first floor windows. Some families distribute rice from large bowls placed outside the front door while others invite their Vajrācārya guests upstairs where their bahī dyas and other images are displayed.

When the Vajrācārya enters the room, he immediately sits on the straw mats (suku) placed down for this purpose. A woman of the house offers purificatory water to his right hand and applies a red ṭikā to his forehead that is prasād from the house's morning offerings. Depending on the family's preference for that year, the thākali will present the Vajrācārya with various foodstuffs: paddy (wā) given in an offering bowl (gulpa) is the dominant choice. As the name pañca dān ("5 gifts") implies, many other possibilities exist. The predominant and oldest choice seems to be other grains such as dehusked rice, wheat, soybeans, chickpeas; other gifts such as fruit, sweets, and money are also made. Khīr ("rice pudding") is another indispensable offering and it is served on a leaf plate. The reason Tuladhars give for presenting this is that they are imitating the textual figure Sujata, the woman who gave khīr to the Buddha on the eve of his enlightenment. Buddhist laymen also offer āyla, distilled spirits, to the Vajrācāryas they know, a subject of joking and, to some, a sign of the low state to which most have fallen.

Plate 94: Pañca Dān Display in a Tuladhar Home

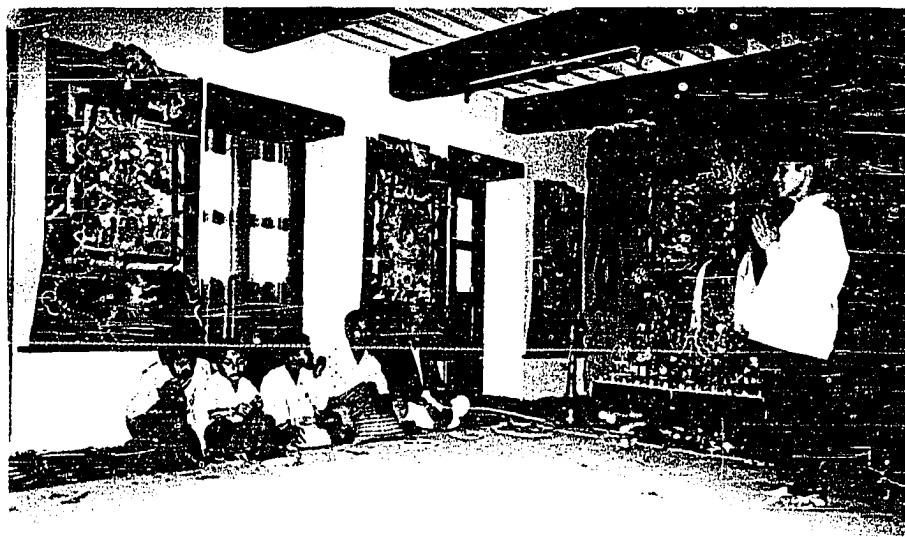
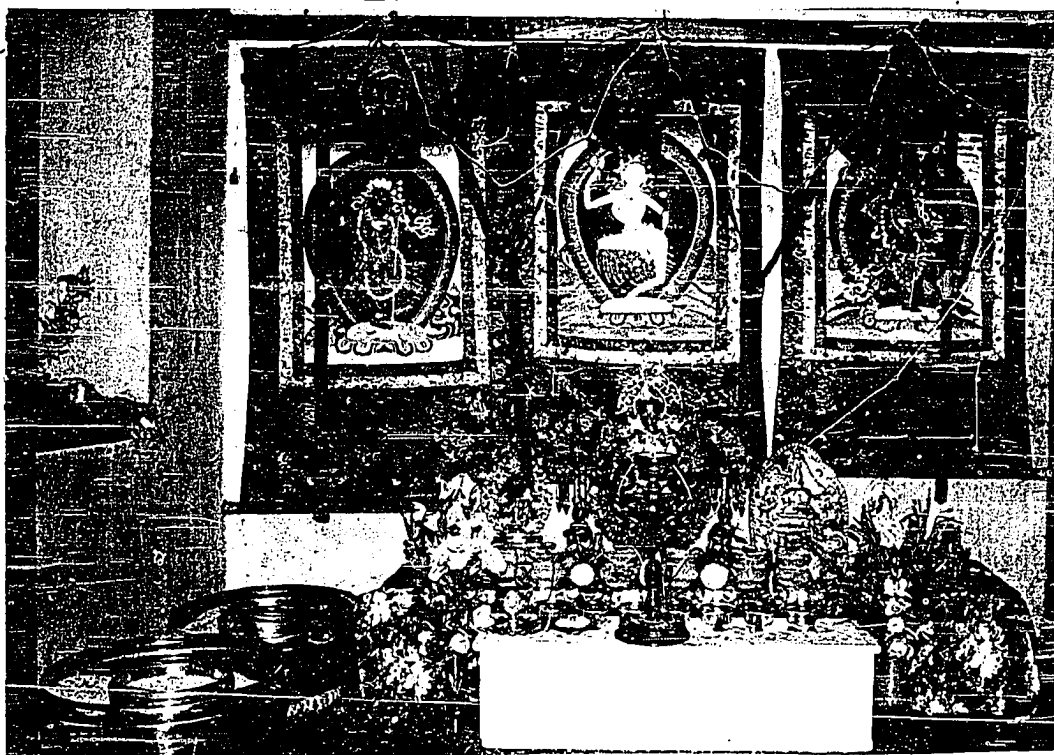


Plate 95: A Tuladhar Offers Pañca Dān to Vajrācārya Gurujus in a Specially Decorated Room

The practices associated with Pañca Dān clearly emphasizes giving (dāna) as the central religious activity for Buddhist householders. Led by wealthy merchants, Pañca Dān was the chief time of the year for laymen to redistribute significant quantities of food to materially support the Vajrācārya sangha. This largesse was formerly so great that the Vajrācāryas had to hire Jyāpus to carry their load of gifts home. Now a single cloth bag suffices. Moreover, many Vajrācāryas do not leave the circle of jajmāns and lay acquaintances for accepting this dāna. The dearth of donations and the social embarrassment modern Vajrācāryas express at having to beg are the reasons given for their curtailed effort. Our surveys showed that most Urāy families made no special efforts to make donations outside of their own circle of acquaintance.

Pañca Dān must also be considered in the context of cross-cultural Buddhist studies. On this day, the Vajrācāryas take up the occupation of begging, the classical occupation of the celibate monk.<sup>1</sup> Thus, each year the Vajrācāryas reiterate the implicit claim that they are Buddhist masters as worthy as bhikṣus to receive dāna that produces great puṇya for the giver. This assertion is consistent with Mahāyāna doctrine that applauds the householder Bodhisattva and

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<sup>1</sup>This is now rare even in Theravada countries (Spiro 1970; Tambiah 1970). The only other occasion for this type of association in Newar tradition is during each young Vajrācārya's initiation ceremony, the ācārya dikshā. Before finishing their installment into the Vajrācārya caste, each must take up the monastic life for four days, living on alms (Locke 1975). After this period, he must renounce the "Srāvakayāna" and embrace the "Bodhisattvayāna" as a householder pursuing a career as a Vajrayāna ritual hierophant. He does so saying that the monk's life is "too difficult". The gestures appropriate to celibate monasticism suggest that this was once an element in the Newar Buddhist past.

teaches that such a person is very capable of spiritual advancement even beyond the śrāvaka vehicle. Both modern Tuladhars and Vajrācāryas understand the connection between Pañca Dān and puṇya explicitly. As one Vajrācārya said, "Dipankara Buddha provided a great service to mankind by establishing Pañca Dān.<sup>1</sup> Laymen can make great puṇya that protects households, rescues beings from bad fates, and may secure a high rebirth state, even Amitābha's paradise, Sukhāvatī, for those who give generously." Tuladhars share this understanding regarding the need for merit. As one said to me during the Pañca Dān: "Just as one paddy grain given here sprouts and produces a great harvest, so will the good effects of this dāna produce good fortune for the householder." This quote and analogy has been recorded throughout the modern Buddhist world (Moerman 1966: 159; Gombrich 1971) and in the earliest Buddhist texts.

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### 3. NĀG PANCHĀMĪ (During Guṇlā)

This special day for worshipping nāgas is observed predominantly by Hindus who place a paper image of the nāgas ("snake gods") above their front doors and make offerings to it. Although only ten per cent of the Asan Tuladhars observed this day of worship, they share with their Hindu neighbors a reverence and belief in the nāgas, as we have noted above. There is a special nāga pūjā performed in Jana Bahā on this day (Locke 1980: 234).

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<sup>1</sup>Locke reports that Pañca Dān in Patan, held on śukla aṣṭamī two weeks earlier, is thought to commemorate a visit of Dipankara Buddha to the Valley (Locke 1980: 234).

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#### 4. SĀPĀRU: Gai Jātrā (During Guṇlā)

Only Hindus observe this festival which is held in all major Newar towns on the first day after the full moon in Sravan. According to the local history, the Newar king Pratāp Malla (ruled 1641-1674) established this festival to assuage his queen's grief after the death of her son. To demonstrate the ubiquity of death and grief in the world, all households in which a death occurred were summoned to pass in a procession by the palace.<sup>1</sup>

The festival's religious roots lie in the belief that dead individuals must cross many rivers to reach the realm of death ruled by Yama, an idea we already saw played out in after-death rituals. According to the tradition, cows are of invaluable assistance in this journey. Both Newar Hindus and Buddhists share the belief that making a gift of a cow to a Brahman insures this service to the departed, as we saw in the case of Buda Janko. With this purpose in mind, after morning rituals, families dress up one or more sons as cows and complete a procession throughout the town. Some may lead a real cow who has been cleaned and garlanded. The elaborateness of the procession expresses the Hindu family's wealth and status in such things as the number of cow boys, in quality of the dress, and according to the extent of musical and other ceremonial accompaniment. The women of the house extend the efforts to provide

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<sup>1</sup>This is also the reason, say informants, for the appearance of "jokers" in the processions: They are free to satirize anything, and dress as women, clowns, or performers.

service to cows by taking a position along this route and making food offerings to all the other "cow groups" which pass. The spectacle draws crowds all along the route and especially at the royal palace.

Newar Buddhists do not join in celebrating this festival<sup>1</sup> although the pūjārīs in Jana Baha do perform a special pūjā petitioning Avalokitesvara to intercede for any members reborn in the hells. Sāpāru in fact is very often the day chosen for Bahi Dya Swayegu in the Asan Tuladhar community. (In 1981, the Asan bājan passed the palace area seemingly oblivious to the Gai Jātrā crowds there.) According to local tradition, not only should Buddhists abstain from participating: they should also not even witness the processions for it is "Māra va:", a reference to Māra, a deity known from the earliest tradition who the Buddha defeated after he attempted to distract him after his Enlightenment.<sup>2</sup> By identifying Hindu practice with the Buddha's defeated foe, this polemic reflects a classical form of ideological assertion by which Buddhist tradition subordinates Hindu deities and observances. Most Tuladhar adults knew of this contention.

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<sup>1</sup>As will be described below, their procession for those in mourning occurs during Indra Jātrā.

<sup>2</sup>Māra also sought to dissuade the Buddha from preaching, and later, in multiple form, became the symbolic embodiment of the klesas ("passions"), skandhas, and death (Waymen 1959: 115). This festival comes right after Guṇlā puṇhi, the day when the Buddha reached Enlightenment according to the Baha Buddhist tradition.



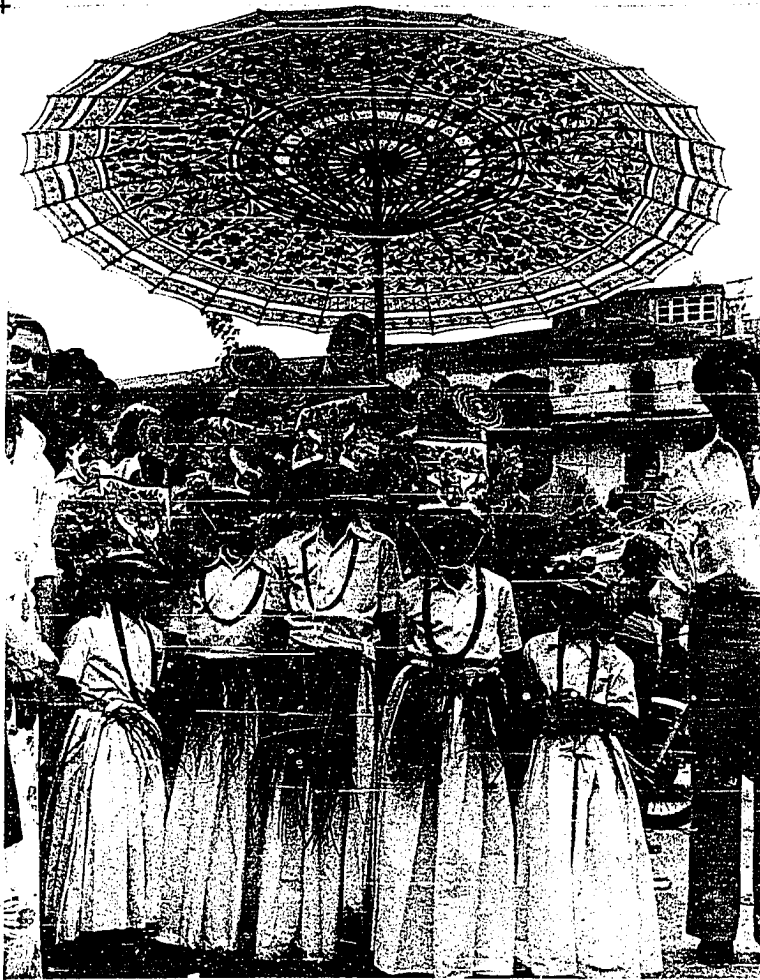
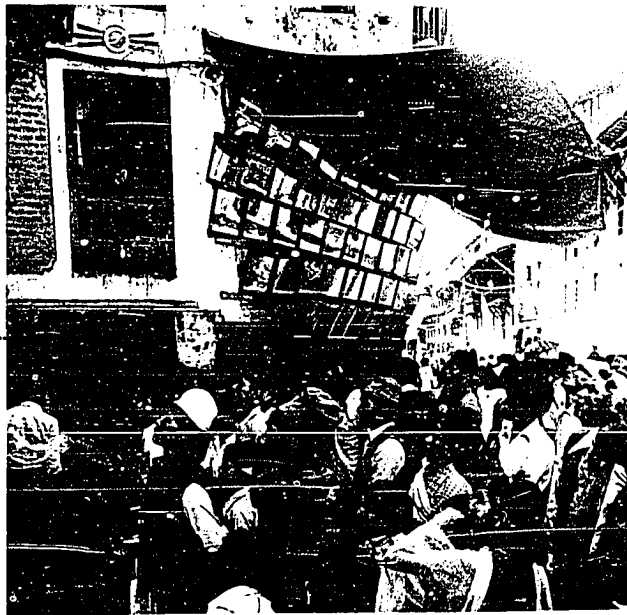


Plate 96: Gai Jātrā:  
Hindu Boys Dressed as  
Cows

Plate 97: A Display  
for Krishna Aṣṭamī



### 5. KRISHNA AṢṬAMĪ (During Guṇlā)

In Asan, Hindu-Buddhist competition is also evident during this festival. Although in modern times Newar Hindus have seemingly fallen away somewhat from strong Krishna devotionism, this two-day festival is the occasion of the yearly pallanquin festival to "the Dark Lord." As is done for the Buddha Jayanti, there is a display of devotional pictures outside of homes and at three prominent public places in Asan.

At the Annapurna dya cher, Shrestha shopkeepers hang over 100 pictures, almost all of which are from the Hindu pantheon: Laksmi, Siva, Ganesh, and, most commonly, scenes from the life of Krishna.

In a Kel tol courtyard, the same Hindu pantheon is present, but about half of the paintings are Buddhist. In 1981, we found a series of paintings depicting: Mahāsattva Raj Kumar Jātaka, Tārā, Mañjusrī, Avalokiteśvara, and tantric deities.

In Kamalachi, the display is almost totally Buddhist and organized by Tuladhars. The major presentations here are the Singhasatabahu Avadāna and the life of the Buddha. There are also other deities from the Mahāyāna pantheon.

These great displays draw large crowds, especially among the young who try to identify each of the pictures, often asking older friends and elders to explain pictures they cannot recognize. Except for it being Guṇlā aṣṭamī, there is no other reason besides competitive display for the Buddhists' involvement on this day.

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## 6. BWĀYĀ KWĀ SVĀYEGU: "LOOKING AT THE FATHER'S FACE" (During Guṇlā)

Both Hindu and Buddhist Newars honor living fathers with gifts and departed fathers with pūjā offerings on this new moon day. Jana Baha draws many who offer pūjā in the name of the recently deceased fathers. They may also go to Gorkhana, the riverside tīrtha northeast of Kathmandu "to see one's father's face" where, as Valley legend has it, a devotee once did. In 1981, early morning buses left from Asan, offering cheap transport to this site.<sup>1</sup>

On this day (and as is true for Mother's Day), the family guruju should pay a visit to the family and receive their dāna since the punya from the donation is dedicated to the deceased.

Living fathers are honored by their children with gifts and a special feast and married out daughters return home for the occasion.

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## 7. TIJ

Tij is a festival observed solely by Hindu women for the good of their present (or, if they are unmarried, future) husbands. In common with the Parbatiya peoples, Shresthas and other Newar Hindu women fast and bathe over a two day period, a tradition specified by the Swastani brata text (Bennet 1978).<sup>2</sup>

In keeping with their generally less rigorous observance of pollution/purity ritualism, Tuladhar women have nothing to do with

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<sup>1</sup>We found that Shresthas were in far greater numbers among those making this excursion.

<sup>2</sup>For the month of Magh, six months later, Brahman storytellers read this text before public gatherings.

this event. Several informants expressed amusement at the trouble Tij imposes on Hindu women.

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## 8. CATHĀ

Both Hindu and Buddhist Newars perform a pūjā to the Moon and to Ganesh on this evening. Led by the female thākali, Tuladhars perform a simple series of pancopacāra offerings which must be completed before the moon sets. In addition to the standard offerings, ginger, sugar cane, and a seasonal flower ("catha swa") must be presented to the deities. Meat and twon are offered, items offered to these deities only on this festival day. The moon icon used is the portable stone sun/moon image normally kept on the rooftop.

Once the very short pūjā is complete, the family sits down to a feast. Places are set for the deities and they are served the foods first. An essential food at this feast is the edible kernel of a peach pit (baspati pu).

According to local folk tradition, this is the night that thieves must worship the moon to insure proficiency in their profession.

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## 9. INDRA JATRA

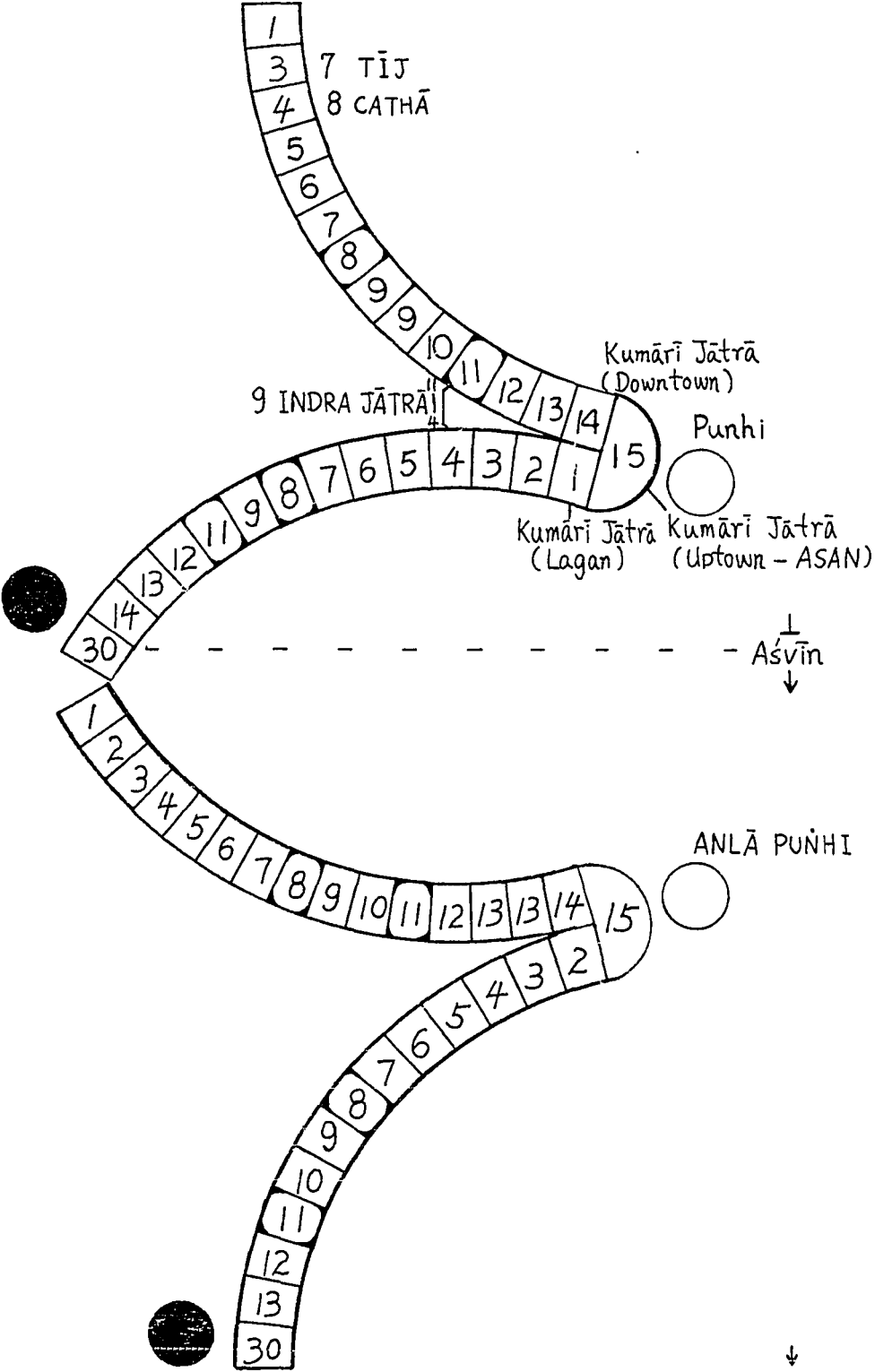
This eight day festival is a conglomeration of many components. The name derives from Indra, the Vedic deity, who according to local mythology, was captured in the Kathmandu Valley.<sup>1</sup> This is depicted

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<sup>1</sup>Ancient Burmese tradition identified the king of the land as Indra (Lehman, as quoted in Tambiah 1976: 90).

FIGURE VII-6: FESTIVAL CALENDAR SECTION:

Tij to IndraJatra



every year at the start of the jātrā when an image is placed in a small cage near the royal palace. The festival begins when many groups help to drag a large tree from the east Valley and raise it on this spot.

The major procession in the festival is Kumārī Jātrā. Kumārīs, prepubescent girls who physically embody female deities in the Newar pantheon, are common in Newar culture (Allen 1975). For this festival, the royal Kumārī who incarnates Taleju, the royal family's protectress, is drawn through the streets in a wheeled chariot. She is accompanied by two other chariots which bear small boys representing Bhairav and Ganesh, her guardians. On the third day of Indra Jātrā, the Kumārī processions begin after the king is first to worship the her. The chariots are also accompanied by royal soldiers, musical groups, and five Vajrācāryas dressed as the Pañca Buddhas ("Five Buddhas"). For the three days of the chariot processions, the pulling begins and ends at the royal palace. On the first day, it passes through the old downtown sector of the city ("kwone"). On the second day, it passes through uptown Kathmandu ("twone"), including Asan. On the last day, it follows a route in southeast Kathmandu.

Indra Jātrā was once a time of special public displays around the town. Large images of Indra and Akash Bhāirav were displayed prominently in many places in Asan, a function underwritten by many Urāy guṭhis, as we have noted. But recently, thefts and fear of thieves have almost eliminated the widespread public placement of these images.

Families usually hold feasts on the day when the Kumārī passes through their neighborhood.

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Masked dancing is another component of Indra Jātrā. Touring groups from various corners of the Valley come to Kathmandu to perform in neighborhoods that will patronize their dramas. They typically portray the mythological drama of a deity from their locality, one common form being the Nava Durga dance (Teilhet 1978). A group from Bhaktapur danced in Asan on the dobu stage every year during my research period.

Other dancers from around Kathmandu perform in the streets throughout the Jātrā: Lākāy, a red-haired demoness; Bhaku, one manifestation of Bhairav; and Pulu Kisi, a beloved cloth elephant danced by two men who is identified as Indra's mount by some, as Ganesh by others. All of these dancers pass through Asan several times during the festival in addition to their accompanying the Kumārī Jātrā.<sup>1</sup>

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A third component of Indra Jātrā is a series of activities for those families who are in mourning due to a death over the past year. On the first day of the Jātrā, the entire family makes a pradakṣiṇā of the entire city on a traditional route, an outing called upāu wanegu or upako wanegu. Led by the family guruju,<sup>2</sup> they chant verses from the

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<sup>1</sup>The former two are enemies so that the masked dancers and their followers often get in real fights during the jātrā.

<sup>2</sup>On this three-hour trip, the Urāy usually do not put down wick lamps, a practice followed by lower caste groups.

Plate 98: Masked Dancing During Indra Jātrā

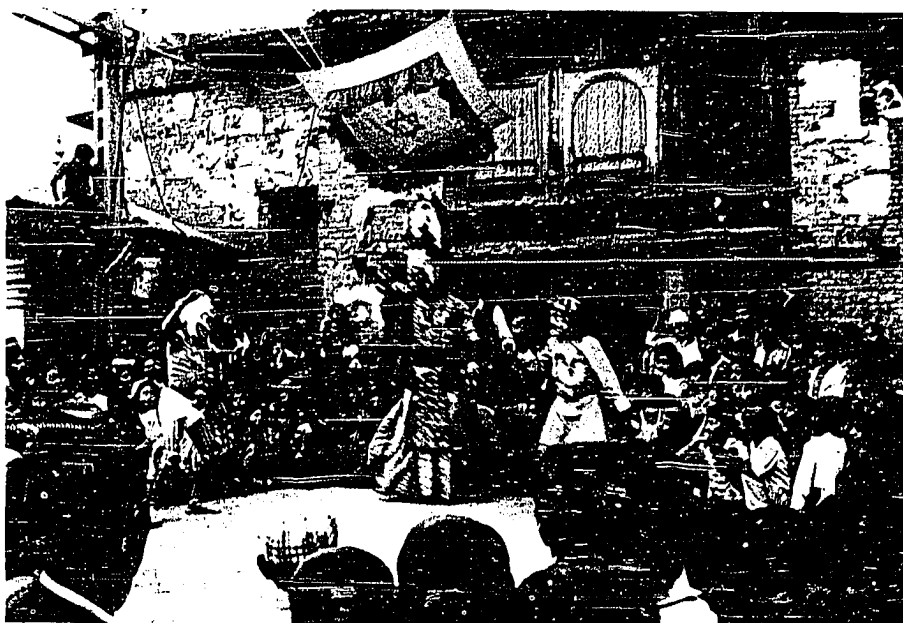


Plate 99: Indra Jātrā: Lamp giving by a Small Girl from a Mourning Family



Nāmsangīti and other texts as they carry burning incense sticks. All along this route, which corresponds to the boundaries of the old city (Slusser 1982), families and some neighborhoods make elaborate decorations, festoon local shrines, and blare out every variety of music to add to the festivities. This procession is made, say informants, to dedicate merit to the recently deceased from the thousands of pūjā offerings made along the route.

A second activity for the mourning is on the first day of the Kumārī Jātrā. The entire family must make another outing, this time along the route followed by the Kumārī procession on the first two days. Led by a young girl of the family and accompanied by Jyāpu attendants bearing lamps and other essentials, the family men give out clay lamps as they call upon all of their friends who have houses and shops along the route. To them, the Urāy give three different style lamps according to the degree of intimacy with the family. Shopkeepers stay open late to witness the processions and receive their friends.

The third aspect of mourning is the "Dagi Procession" and takes place on the same night. One woman of the house, and especially widows, should join a procession around the Kumārī Jātrā route. Led by a masked dancer possessed by the Dagi spirit identified as Indra's mother (Vajrācārya 1981: 132), the women hold onto the dancer's long sash as it moves at a brisk pace through the town. A special long series of lamps also accompanies the Dagi procession. Tuladhars join this on the belief that Indra's mother can assist the deceased in reaching a good heavenly abode.

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# 10. MOHINI ("DASAIN, DASHARA")

This long festival is celebrated by both Hindu and Buddhist Newars in essentially the same form. As such, Mohini is a jātrā shared by all in Asan at harvest time. Dasain, as the Parbatiya people call it, is also celebrated by hill Nepalis and with great pomp by the modern Nepalese state.

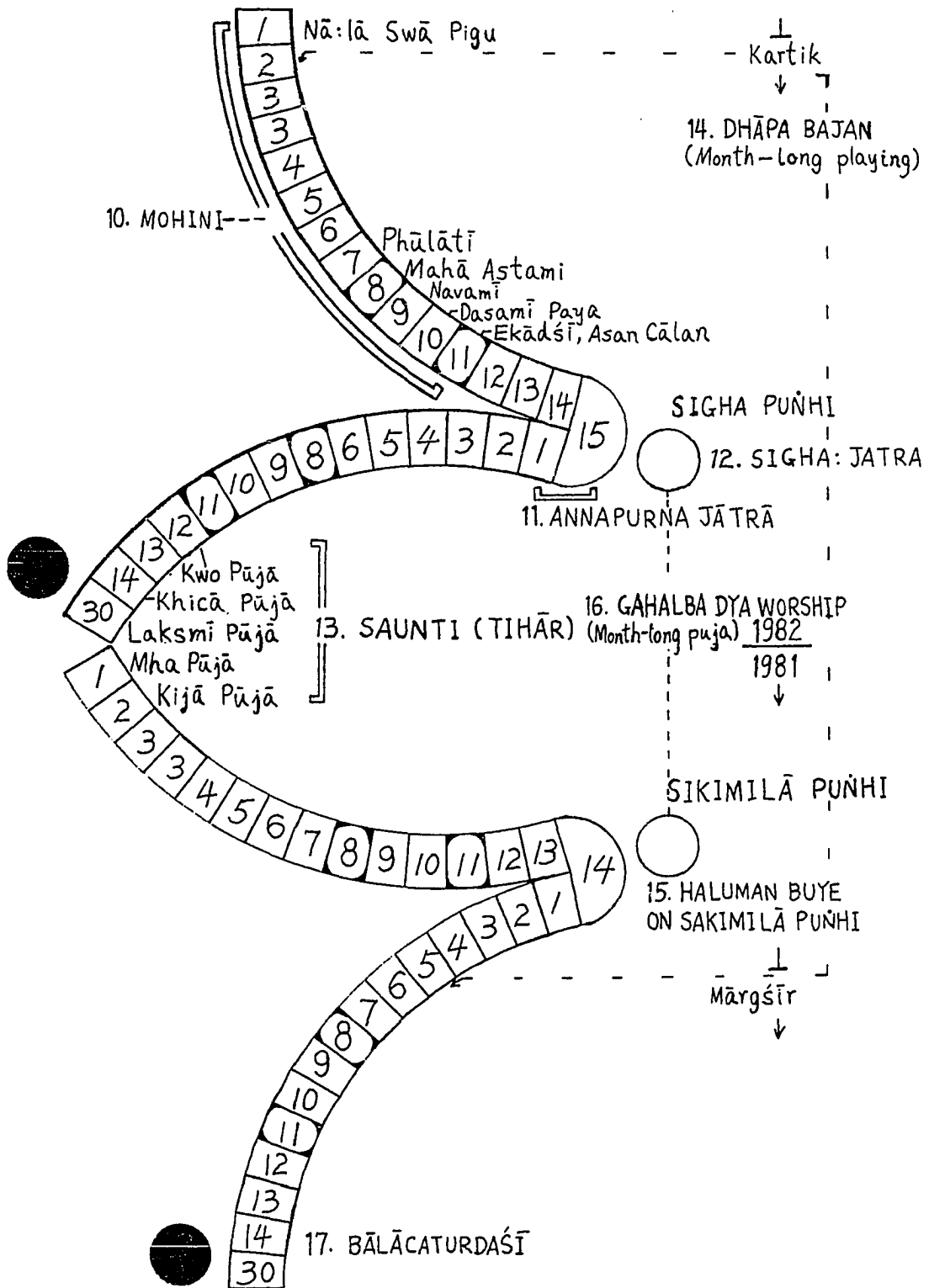
For the hill peoples, it is the yearly opportunity for selling off the animals they have raised over the past year (goats, fowl, buffalos). Ad hoc animal markets spring up around the edges of town, street peddlars appear selling the speciality items needed for household rituals, and the shopkeepers expand their shops out into the streets. In Asan, business increases because of these newly enriched visitors and because of city residents' buying the many items needed for the elaborate feasting that the festival entails. In the period from Mohini to Saunti ("Tihar"), shopkeepers say they make half of their sales for the entire year.

Mohini begins on the first day of śukla Kartik and runs until the eleventh day. We will present the major events in the sequence of observances.

## Na:lā Swā Pigu

The observances commence in the āgam. After all of the house is ritually cleaned, the women plant barley and wheat seeds in sand brought from the riverside. For each of the first eight days, they will pour river water on this sanctified area, then cover the "planting" with a large bowl. The sprouts, called "nali swā", or "jamara" will later be used for offerings and worn as prasād from

FIGURE VII-7: FESTIVAL CALENDAR SECTION:

Mohini to Saunti

aṣṭamī onward.

### Phūlpātī

On the seventh day of the festival, the kalash of Taleju, one manifestation of Durgā who is the royal protectress, is carried in procession from Gorkha, the ancient center of the Shah dynasty. After being viewed by the King, the kalash is ritually established in the royal palace at Hanuman Dhoka.<sup>1</sup> This lengthy and elaborate procession of officiants and government officials passes through Asan Tol.

### Mahā Aṣṭamī

For most Asan Tuladhars, elaborate offerings including the nali swā are made to the household āgam dya and to Karunamaya of Jana Baha. The largest family feast of the year, kuchi bhwāy, is held by most families on this evening.

### Navamī

The Newari nickname for this day, "Syako Tyako", (which means "the more killed, so much the better") refers to the plethora of sacrifices made on Navamī. On this day, every worker lays aside his tools and makes offerings to them. Hindus may include the blood from sacrificial animals in the presentations; Buddhists usually offer the standard pancopacāra offerings, including the nali swā sprouts.

In contrast to twenty years ago, most Tuladhars now do not make

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<sup>1</sup>The Tuladhars have a ritual role in the key rituals of this Mohini cult held at the temple here, as discussed under the Kumar Pyekhan below.

blood sacrifices to their tools, vehicles, and chosen deities. They do "sacrifice" duck eggs to these objects, which are not supposed to be used on this day. They also visit Jana Bahā Avalokiteśvara in great numbers.

The pūjārīs of Taleju both inside the Palace and in a nearby courtyard officiate at sacrifices "dispatching" hundreds of buffaloes and goats to the goddess Durga, a spectacle attended by palace and government officials and witnessed by lines of local, mostly Hindu, devotees.

In Asan, government officiants change the large bamboo pole in the center of the market and put up a new flag to Bhairav on it. Once established, a pūjārī sacrifices a goat to the pole with a single blow of a large khukuri knife. The local people have no role in this rite and most are hardly aware of the cult's existence.

The Annapurna temple in Asan likewise is the scene of many sacrificial offerings. The actual "cutting" (as the Newars say) is performed by the regular Jyāpu attendants, but the animals' blood is shed outside the sanctum at the guardian lion on the left side of the entrance. Many ducks are killed and long lines form of devotees, mostly women, making the offerings.

With most shops closed and the streets filled with people dragging animals to be sacrificed or carrying beheaded carcasses, the "feel" of the market becomes radically different from a regular market day. This is later accentuated by the passing of many finely dressed family groups through the streets. On Navami, Asan achieves a rare sense of cultural focus as both Hindu and Buddhist Newars share in the



Plate 100: Women Convey  
Nali Sva Offerings to  
the Annapurna, Asan

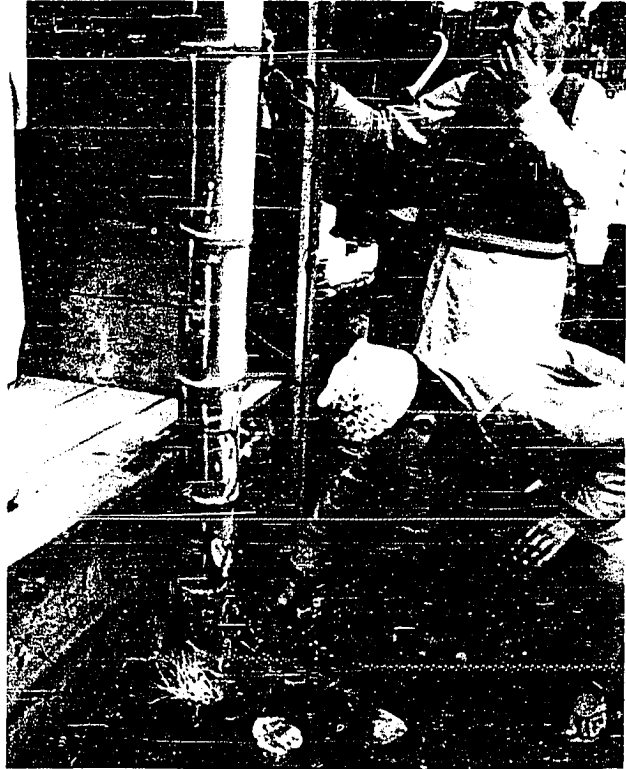


Plate 101: Mohini:  
Pūjā to the Bhāirava  
Pole in Asan

same general ritual involvement, by not working because they are "resting" their tools, and as they enjoy rooftop leisure with friends and kin. Moreover, most of the boys in town fly their combating kites (with glass-coated string) from the rooftops, a spectacle for all to enjoy.

### Dasamī Paya

Many Newar groups hold processions called Kharga Jātrā from their Āgam Dya or from the Dya Cheñ of a deity with whom they have a special relationship. The eldest men from each separate lineage must make a procession out from the sacred shrine. Holding sanctified and empowered swords (Kharga), they move along the route accompanied by attendants. Some shake and may become so deeply possessed that they may even momentarily threaten the crowds that line the routes for darśan. The procession usually ends when the eldest man sacrifices an animal after he returns to the dya cheñ. This ritual drama is said to be an enactment of Durga's slaughter of Mahāsūra. As we will note momentarily, the Asan Tuladhars perform a ritual on the next day which is both similiar to and a parody of this performance.

On this day in most Newar communities, everyone must pay a visit to his kin seniors and receive ṭikā from them.

### Ekādaśī, Asan Cālan

The Asan Tuladhars are unique in making their Kharga Jātrā on the next day and refer to the day as "Asan Paya". In most families having private āgams, the men form a sword procession inside their own homes. These start from the āgam and end with each man taking a

turn, sword in hand, at hacking a pumpkin or sugar cane stalks.

Representatives of each family in the large Tuladhar lineage with their āgam in the Baku Nani courtyard make an outdoor procession around the temples of Asan and back to the courtyard where they hack two pumpkins with demon faces painted on them. This group of over twenty-five households must be represented by the youngest member of the lineage. The youngest baby who has had Macca Janko, after being accompanied to the starting courtyard by the Guṇlā Bājan, leads the procession held in his father's arms. Elder Tuladhars accompany the line of young boys who process in single-file ascending age order as they hold small swords. Some of the men burn charcoal, others sound damaru drums, and still others play cymbals. Just as observers on the day before would come and reverently touch the elder's swords, onlookers do the same here despite the young age of the boys and their relaxed demeanor which has no suggestion of possession. On returning to the Baku Nani courtyard, each boy takes one or two hacks at the demon-faced pumpkins. The boys then return the swords, receive ṭika, and then go with the group for a small feast.

Other large lineage groups also have smaller Paya processions in the courtyard of that year's Pālā and follow the same form and agenda.

None of my informants could suggest a reason for the Asan Tuladhars having a different day and an inverted order for their own Paya.

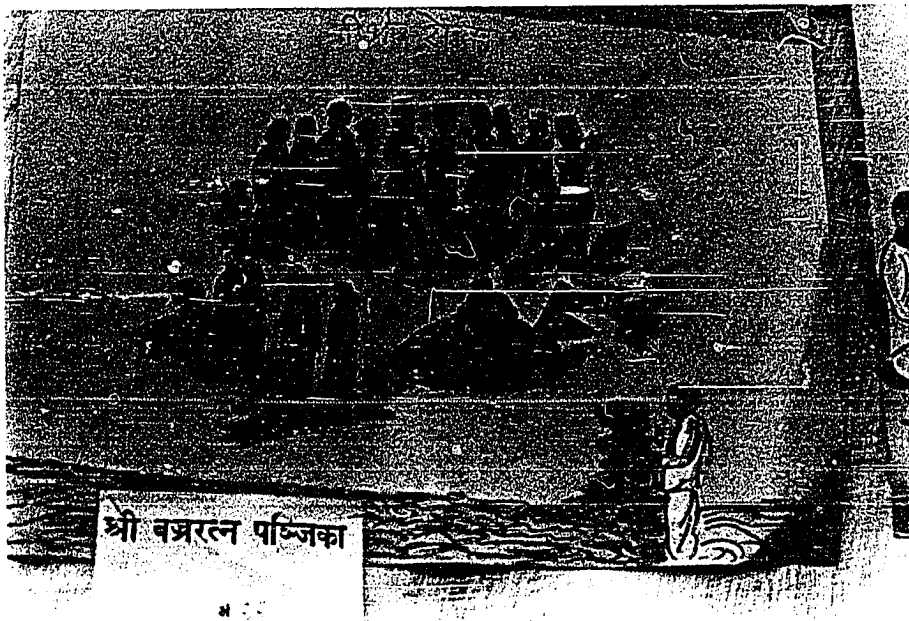
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Plate 102: Mohini: Asan Cālan



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Plate 103: Mohini: Painting Depicting Nava Ratri Tīrtha Jātrā

SPECIAL EVENTS DURING DASAIN

Nava Ratrī Bathing

At several points in an individual's lifetime, he may choose to observe the practice of bathing at tīrthas during the nine nights ("Nava Ratrī") of Mohini. Each year, individuals from different neighborhoods take it upon themselves to organize such a group. They make all of the arrangements: for a priest to lead in the riverside rituals, by procuring the necessary materials, and arranging for musical accompaniment. The list given in Chapter III was that followed in 1979 by a group organized around Indracok.

Both Hindu and Buddhist groups can be formed, the basis of differentiating being the priest hired to perform the riverside ritual and, occasionally, tell stories there. For most people, this ritual is but a small part of the event, and both Hindus and Buddhists readily join groups with either type of pūjārī. On the textual level, the Vajrācāryas have distinctly Buddhist accounts of the origin and fruits of bathing at the different tīrthas and these often contain derogatory references to the Hindu gods. In the last decade, Badri Vajrācārya has led several different groups which have emphasized this storytelling.

The riverside ritual is simple. Once they reach the site, the organizers lead in constructing a sand stupa (Buddhist) or linga (Hindu). Once formed, a portable red cloth umbrella is placed over it and as the pūjārī chants dedicatory mantras, all join in making their own small pancopacāra offerings. Once this is completed, a story associated with the site might be told. Some devotees may also make

offerings of wick lamps which are floated downstream on leaf rafts. Individuals should also bathe, though there is variation in the extent to which people fully submerge themselves on these usually chilly fall days.

This tradition of bathing and tīrtha visitation offers a good example of both Hindus and Buddhists engaging in a religious activity that both traditions recognize as beneficial to their spiritual well-being. (The good karma that accrues to the individual as a result of worship and purification is always a part of the tīrtha stories.) Thus, only when we reach mythic-literary level of tradition do we find a difference between the Hindu and Buddhist Newar traditions. These stories represent the efforts by the literati-virtuosi of both traditions in their attempt to "claim" the religious sites as their own. Their vitality among the Urāy points out the power of Buddhist identity in the community. The survival of both traditions' separate accounts also indicates how important "Hindu-Buddhist" labels are for the Newars: both groups of devotees do ablutions and the same essential pūjās, but to their own images; the reasons for doing so-- cutting one's own pāp and making punya for oneself and others-- are also congruent. Only when the intellectual level of situation is reached and the different purohīts are invoked do these labels have any relevance to the common men who share a world view based upon karma.

#### Kumar Pyekhan

In a tradition shared only with the Tamrakars of Maru tol, the Tuladhars and Kansakars have a role in the Taleju cult centered in the

royal palace. The "downtown" Tamrakars have a dancer who portrays Ganesh; the uptown Asan group has a dancer who portrays Kumar: both are sons of Siva who are regarded as Taleju's protectors. A boy from this latter group must dance three times during Mohini before the goddess: [1] At the removal of the goddess' kalash from the sanctum of the temple to an adjacent courtyard (on Phulpati); [2] During the late night Kharga Jātrā of the goddess's pūjārīs, the Hindu Karmācārya priests, when they must process from the temple to Indracok and back (on Daśamī); and [3] When the kalash is put back into the temple (on Ekadāśī).

When the Kumar dancer's presence is required, every kawa ("division") of the Asan Samyak Guthi must be represented. Members must play the instruments of the Pañca Tāl bājan which are essential in the performance of the dance. These members are:

1. five pañṭā horn players
2. one three-part Khoda drum player
3. one bambu cymbal player
4. one Tha drummer
5. singers who sing the Sanskrit verses

A typical dance performance sequence goes as follows: After an introductory dance outside the dancer's home, the group proceeds to orchestrate short dance sequences before Annapurna, outside Ta Che Bahā, Jana Bahā, and in Indracok before Akasha Bhairav. Outside of Ta Che Bahā the dancer also stops to worship Nāṣa Dya and receive ṭikā from his Vajrācārya teacher who must be from this bahā's sangha. Once he reaches the Palace, he dances outside of the gates and then proceeds inside for the performances which are closed to the public. On his return route, the dancer repeats the same dance sequences along the route.

A selection by lottery of the boy who dances for a five year period is carried out in the Asan Tuladhar and Kansakar communities among all households with boys from ten to thirteen. The trouble involved in learning and performing makes this task one that is particularly unwelcome.<sup>1</sup>

While he learns the dance and in the performance period, the boy must eat separately from the family and abstain from meat and alcohol. Tuladhars call the dance "tantric" but do not know much about it as the guruju maintains secrecy about its details.

The role of the merchant Newar community in the cult of the royal family emphasizes the nature of the relationship between the two groups. By dancing in the role of a god who protects the goddess who guards the security of the kingdom, the Urāy express their alliance with royal power. The ritual also "says" that the wealth and power of the traders is at work for the well-being of the state and , in return, the King thereby acknowledges the traders' singular high standing in society.<sup>2</sup>

#### Buffalo Sacrifice to Annapurna

The Jyapus who maintain the Annapurna temple sponsor a special, secret sacrifice to this goddess during Mohini. This is also considered the start of the yearly pallaquin jātrā that continues after the festival. Late on Navamī night, they lead a buffalo through

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<sup>1</sup> Customs allows the "winner" to pay another Urāy boy to do the dance for him.

<sup>2</sup> It is telling that in Rana times the relationship broke down so that the military had to intervene on several occasions to enforce the Urāy community's participation.

the back alleys from the dya cheñ to the temple . After all of the streets leading into Asan are blocked off and the call "Svay Maju" is made ("[it is] improper to look on"), a Karmācārya priest officiates as the buffalo is ritually sacrificed before the goddess.

On the next morning (Dasamī), the body of the buffalo is cut into seven pieces--4 legs, torso, tail, and heart--and placed before the temple entrance and before the Ganesh temple nearby. A musical group assembles in the morning and the young men of the Jyapu families carry the pieces on sticks in procession to the dya cheñ. After a ceremonial welcome by the female thākalis, the procession moves to the inside courtyard. Under the direction of the priest, the body parts are arranged on the ground in their 'natural' order. After covering the assemblage with a white cloth, the priest and his attendants move beneath and pronounce mantras over the carcass for two minutes: in the old days, say informants, the priest could resurrect the body. Tales of a former twelve-year cycle of human sacrifice on this occasion are still mentioned.

Tuladhars and Shresthas of Asan have no direct role in this ritual outside of their making donations to the ritualists who go from house to house giving prasād in exchange. This practice has fallen off dramatically in recent years.

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#### 11. ANNAPURNA JĀTRĀ

Under the direction of the Jyāpu pūjārī families, the yearly festival of Asan's chief goddess Annapurna is held right after Mohini starting on the śukla ekādaśī of Asvin. After the government makes the



Plate 104: Annapurna Jātrā: Goat Sacrifice to the Goddess Before a  
Vajrācārya Pūjārī

first offerings, attendants and other devotees bear the goddess in her pAllanquin around Kathmandu town for two days. The Asan Jñānamāla Bhajan, its harmonium mounted on a wheeled handtruck, accompanies the procession for the first day. Older Tuladhars mentioned that their caste members should accompany the jātrā for part of its procession, a practice that has declined greatly in recent years.

Only on the second day does the pallanquin finally makes the rounds through the Asan streets. At this time, the bearers stop outside individual houses so that the families can make individual offerings. Some Tuladhars may employ their family guruju to make the pūjā presentations and many families hold small feasts this night, calling their married-out daughters to their homes.

Another significant event in the Annapurna Jātrā is the participation of a Jyāpu flute bājan which comes from Thimi. Their role is consistent with the account linking Thimi with the temple's founding, as presented in Chapter III.

The festival ends with the late night sacrifice of a sheep, with the temple's Vajrācārya purohit performing the ritual for a Shrestha family patron.

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## 12. SI GHA: JĀTRĀ

This Jātrā, centered on the Kathisimbhu Stupa, occurs during the full moon of Kartik. People who have established stupas around this great monument should perform their yearly homa pūjā of reconsecration on this day. Among them are many Asan Tuladhars who must clean the chaitya and call their family Vajrācārya to do the ritual.



That evening, a pallanquin procession is taken out from the bahā with an image of Amitābha Buddha inside. This group is joined by the Asan Jñānamala bhajan and passes through Asan where some Urāy families make offerings.

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### 13. SAUNTI (TIHAR)

This is a six day festival centered on the worship of the goddess of wealth, Laksmī. As with Mohini, all Newars in Asan celebrate this festival in roughly the same manner. The end of Saunti marks the Newar New Year; other aspects emphasize kinship ties, financial prosperity, and physical well-being. Tuladhar informants repeatedly stated that the activities of Saunti "had nothing to do with Buddha Dharma." Except for the guru maṇḍala pūjā which forms a part of the simple rituals done in Tuladhar homes, this is indeed the case.

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### Laksmī Devotionalism

Among the Tuladhars, belief in the goddess Laksmī is strong. Although she is one of the most widely recognized deities in the Newar pantheon, in Kathmandu there are very few public shrines to her as she is primarily a household shrine deity.<sup>1</sup> Tuladhars say that she likes the cleanest places and dislikes households where there is discord or poverty. Tuladhars say that Laksmī helps those who are thrifty,

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<sup>1</sup>Although Newar Buddhist texts identify Laksmī as Vasundhara (Slusser 1982: 421), the images inside of the Tuladhar homes are mostly those that Newar Hindus use, i.e. Laksmī, Vishnu's wife, on mass-produced pictures imported from India.

prudent, and well-prepared. For this reason, women try never to let their storerooms go bare or ever run out of essential commodities. In belief and practice, then, Tuladhars share with the Shresthas a common tradition of devotion to Laksmī.<sup>1</sup>

On the first day of Saunti, each family opens up their bāpa, a wooden cabinet, that houses its Laksmī shrine and the old family treasury box. Except for this festival week, these remain locked away in the senior male's room. Once it is set out on an area sanctified by a clay/cow dung coating in a ritually purified room, the Tuladhars light a sukunda lamp and a ghee lamp, offerings that should not go out for the entire festival. Some families renew the painting of Laksmī which is pasted on the outside of the bāpa, a task they once called the Chitrakars to do but which now can be done by purchasing one of the cheap prints which are sold in the market before the festival.

Offerings made to Laksmī during Saunti must never be taken from the shrine and all coins except those made of aluminum are ju. Tuladhars believe that Laksmī can multiply these coins offered to her if she is pleased so that during the festival families present a large portion of all feasts to her. Once these offerings become prasād, they are guarded carefully to be sure that the family's blessings from the

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<sup>1</sup>A key area of difference, however, is that the Buddhists do not worship the female cows who frequent the market as do the Hindus who regard them as manifestations of the goddess. Hindu Newars often will touch a cow and do añ yāye ; I never observed a Tuladhar doing this, a fact all informants reiterated in interviews.

Plate 105: Annapurna Jātrā: Rites to Revive the Dismembered  
Sacrificial Buffalo

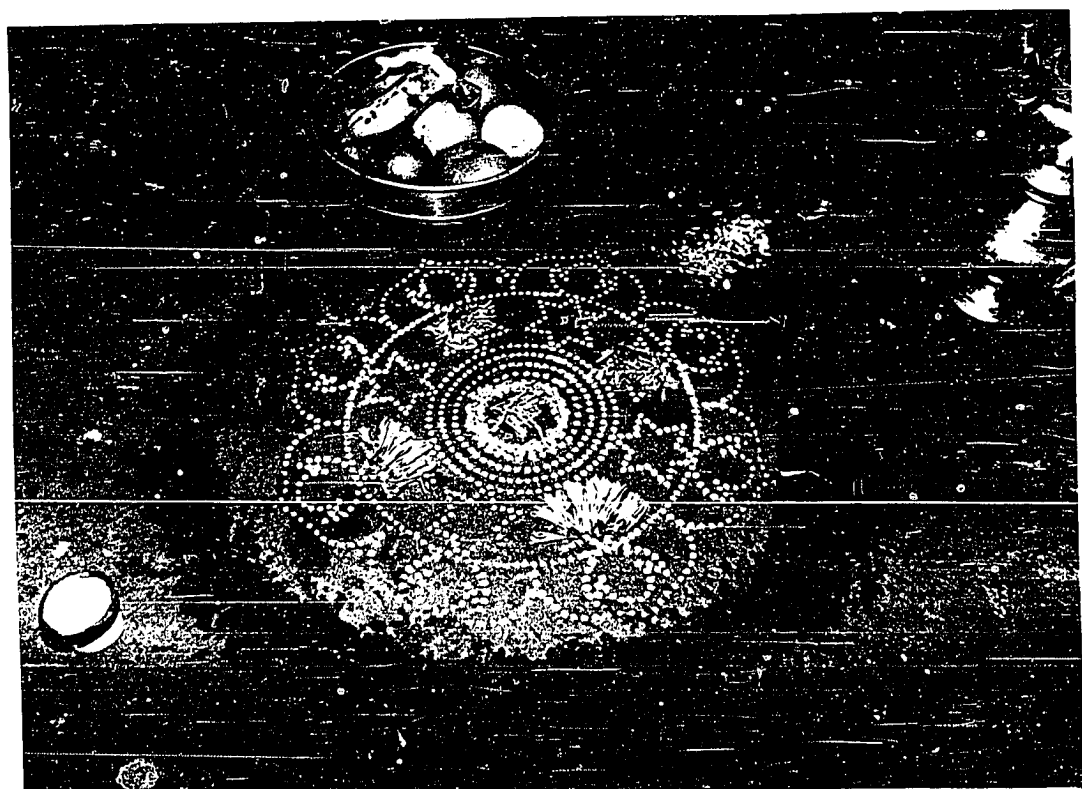


Plate 106: Saunti: The Mha Pūjā Maṇḍala

goddess are not distributed to outsiders.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, only family members may come into the Laksmī pūjā room, a rule that is strictly enforced.

#### Day 1: Kwo Pūjā ("Crow Pūjā")

I did not observe a single instance of Asan people making special offerings to the crows on this first day of the festival. The mythic crow, Lag Bali, a messenger of death, is associated with the account of kijā pūjā, discussed below. As is the case every morning on Asan rooftops, crows do arrive to partake of the rice offerings to Svayambhū which are thrown by the woman of the house.

#### Day 2: Khicā Pūjā ("Dog Pūjā")

Most Tuladhars make the connection between this dog worship and Yama's dogs who guard the gates of the afterworld. Tuladhars garland their dogs and offer them ṭikā and sweets on this day; these offerings seem to be done out of affection to family pets rather than as acts of religious devotion.

#### Day 4: Laksmī Pūjā

By the time the festival reaches Laksmī Pūjā, on the fourth day (puṇhi) , the market again reaches its highest level of yearly activity. People must buy the essentials for the many feasts; they also try to purchase a new outfit of clothes and decorations for the house. In the courtyards, children work at festooning the doors and

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<sup>1</sup>The reason for this, as one Tuladhar told me, is that "then they, not the family, will become rich as a result of our offerings."

windows of their houses with garlands of marigolds. A panoply of lights illuminates the downtown, their variety spanning the spectrum of technological development: oil wick lamps in sun baked pots, candles, and electric imports from Hong Kong.

To add to the decorative effects, neighborhoods erect ceremonial entranceways of every description on the market streets, most bearing a new year's greeting. A recent addition is firecrackers which add a discordant note to the peace and beauty of the town illuminated by thousands of small lights.

All of these decorations are intended as an offering to Lakṣmī who is thought to visit the town and each family on this evening. Local belief is that Lakṣmī comes to inspect every house, takes the essence of the offerings set out for her, and either blesses the house or ignores it. Before going to bed, children put out coins which they hope one of Lakṣmī's attendants, the white Khyas, will multiply from their treasury. (Some parents do see that it is so.)

#### Day 5: Mha Pūjā ("Pūjā for [one's own] Body")

This day marks the Newar New Year and the festive atmosphere is maintained by shops closing for the day. In the evening the main festivity is the mha pūjā performed by each member of the household in the family feasting room. After the floor is purified with water, a simple maṇḍala is made in front of each person's place with white chalk.<sup>1</sup> Then offerings are placed down on the maṇḍala. Almost everyone

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<sup>1</sup>This maṇḍala is shown in Plate 106. Although it was encountered in this general form in all of the houses I sampled, no Tuladhar or Vajrācārya could explain the symbolism.

thought that the pūjā was for the strength of the body in the upcoming year. In addition to the family members, other household objects also receive maṇḍala offerings, each symbolizing a certain deity.<sup>1</sup> These are: hāsā (winnowing tray); Tuphi (broom); Gha: (Water jug); lhoma (mortar/pestle); and the wheat grinder stone. Maṇḍalas with offerings are also made to Laksmī, Ganesh and "Janke Kwo", Yama's messenger.

Once all the maṇḍalas are set out, each person in the family sits before one in order of seniority. The female thākali offers a thread loop to each person's maṇḍala, inserts a stick of incense, then starts with the seniormost men presenting a long lighted wick to each to which is added a plate of fruit offerings. This wick symbolizes long life and should not go out during the presentation. The recipient then puts these offerings on the maṇḍala. This simple pūjā is followed by a presentation of Dhau sagan. Only in Vajrācārya

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<sup>1</sup>According to the Sthirobhava Vākya (Slusser 1982: 421), the Gr̥halaksmī, or Aṣṭamātrkā, goddesses and other gods associated with these objects are:

| <u>Object</u>                   | <u>Deity</u>  |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| tuphi (broom)                   | Brahmayanī    |
| <u>hāsā</u> (winnowing tray)    | Mahesvarī     |
| grindstone                      | Kaumārī       |
| stone roller                    | Vaisnavī      |
| pestle                          | Vārāhī        |
| Mortar                          | Indrāyanī     |
| <u>gha:</u> (water jug)         | Camundā       |
| <u>ankora</u> (drinking vessel) | MahaLaksmī    |
| <hr/>                           |               |
| Stove                           | Vajrajoginī   |
| <u>mana</u> container           | <u>yaksha</u> |
| <u>pathi</u> container          | Kuber         |
| rice cooking pot                | MahāKala      |
| lentil cooking pot              | Kumar         |

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The Tuladhars were not aware of these associations.

Plate 107: Mha Pūjā Maṇḍalas for Household Tools

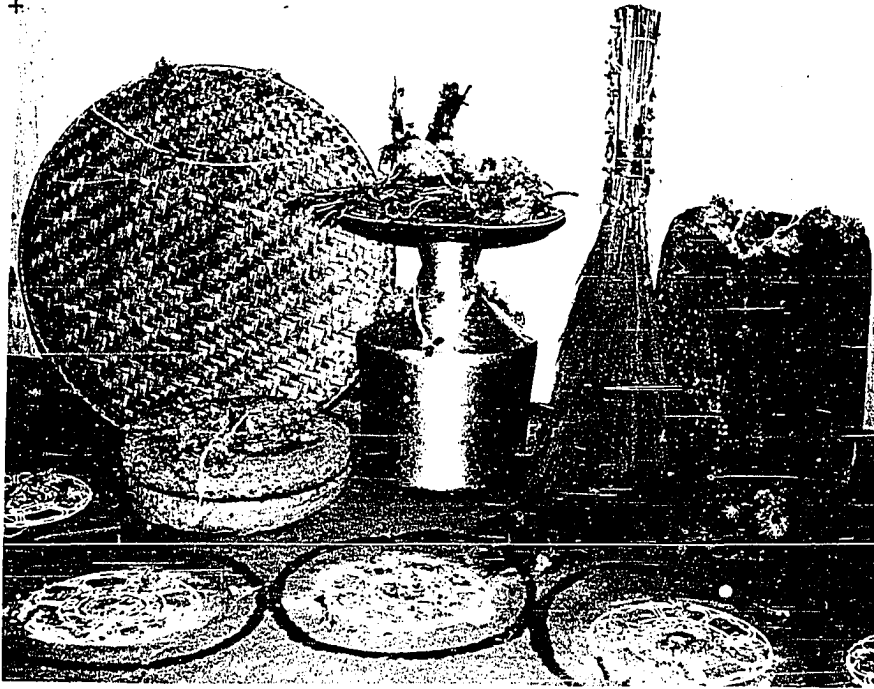
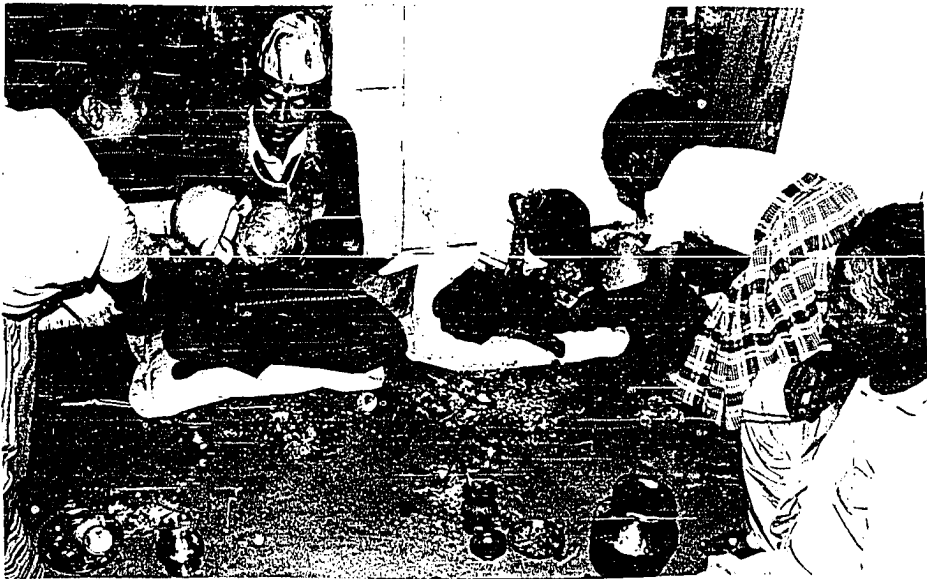


Plate 108: Saunti: Kijā Pūjā



households does the addition of a guru maṇḍala pūjā give a Buddhist dimension to Mha Pūjā.

Once these ceremonies are complete, the largest feast of the year is set out on special brass plates called siphal dema. Before individuals start eating, a eight-part ghāsā offering placed on a leaf plate must be set out for a special dya cāyekegu. Informants identified these eight ghāsā as an offering to the aṣṭa mātṛkā goddesses; other dya cāyekegu meat offerings are also set out for Bhāirav, Mahāṅkal, Ganesh, and Kumārī. On this day only will the uncleared dinner plates be left out overnight, a custom followed so that when Yama's messenger, Bali Rājā, comes he will see the household's prosperity reflected by the grandness of the feast.

In the past five years, the Newar New Year's day has also been a day for massive rallies in support of "Newa: Bhāy", i.e. Newari language, and to urge that the nation adopt the Newari calendar as its official standard.<sup>1</sup>

#### Day 6: Kijā Pūjā

On the day after Mha Pūjā, the ties between sisters and brothers are underlined as the former make the same Mha Pūjā offerings to their younger brothers. After the presentations, the older sisters then

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<sup>1</sup>In the morning, processions from many neighborhoods move through the entire town, followed the route for Gai Jātrā. The Asan Guṇlā bājan joined this in 1980 and 1981. In 1981, there were also afternoon demonstrations that linked the major cities of the Valley, with participants forming long processions according to vehicle type: motorcycle groups, tractors, and bicycles assembled to move around the valley carrying signs to promote the cause of Newar nationalism. All of these passed through central Asan Tol.



throw a handful of flowers on top of the brother's head, touch each shoulder three times, then do añ yāye, touching the brother's feet. The latter give their sister(s) gifts in return. Among the Tuladhars, the younger brothers ("kijā") will go to their married-out sisters' affinal homes.<sup>1</sup> After these formal presentations, a large feast is served.

These simple rituals are thought to ward off evil spirits and the messengers of death for another year. A popular story tells of one woman's success in fooling Yama for many years and prolonging her younger brothers life as a result of this pūjā.

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#### 14. DHĀPA BĀJAN

For one month generally during Kartik every year, the Tuladhar Guñlā Bājan group plays a different drum in accompaniment to devotional singing before the Annapurna temple. Although the exact time of commencement and ending is at the discretion of the Pālā, this playing is usually completed soon after Sakimila Puñhi.

The Dhāpa is a two sided, very tightly bound drum that produces a range of sounds, the most characteristic of which is a highly reverberating "twang". The Dhāpa is hard to play well and few of the Asan Tuladhars still try to; for this reason, they hired a Jyāpu musician to join their group in 1979 and 1980. Another type of cymbal, the chali, is played along with the Dhāpa; The tā: cymbals are the only instrument in common with the Guñlā Bājan and here, too, it

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<sup>1</sup>Shrestha women, by contrast, return to their natal homes.

leads the bājan.

The chorus sings songs chosen from two large books which are referred to by the singers during the singing. The Dhāpa Bājan singers sing devotional songs (in barely understood archaic Newari) to many deities in the Indian pantheon, both Hindu and Buddhist.

Before the start of the year's playing, the Pala arranges for a Vajrācārya-led pūjā to Nāṣa Dya and Hanuman, which is followed by a small feast. After the guruju gives the Tuladhars prasād, he formally hands over the drums to the leading players, acknowledging that they are now ready to be played. Several pieces are played before the group disperses.

Each evening after the market has mostly closed down (c. 9:30 PM), the Pala sets up suku mats, two drums, the chali, tā:, and song books just outside the door to the Annapurna temple. A five cup brass offeratory lamp is also set out in the middle of the group. After the obligatory introductory drumming (dya lhyāyegu), those present select the songs that are to be played. The program usually lasts for a little over an hour. During the last song, the eldest male present lights the lamp and waves it ceremoniously as he does darśan to the image in the sanctum of the temple. When this song is over, and after the closing drumbeat is played, he then chants out: "Annapurna Mā Jāi !" ("Victory to Mother Annapurna !") The group responds with "Sakale Bhai Jāi !" ("And to all [who are] Brothers [here] !")

Following this, all come to take arti from the flame, just as is done in the JñānaMālā Bhajan. The Pālā usually has a sweet for all who came, giving one first to Annapurna, the instruments ("for Nāṣa Dya"), the songbooks, and finally to each person, Tuladhars and others,

present. The Pālā then packs up the equipment and moves homeward, making a pradakṣiṇā of the temple en route. This standard order is enlarged upon for the Halimoni Buye celebrations on Sakimilā Puṇhi, described next. A few days after this puṇhi, all in the bajan are again invited for a small snack before the drums are stored for another year.<sup>1</sup>

After this, the group remains inactive until a feast is held in Phalgun.

The Dhāpa bājan is yet another case study in declining tradition.<sup>2</sup> Only the requirement of sub-Pālā attendance insured the necessary quorum during 1981. Very few people know the songs and on most evenings, few even sing so that, at present, a core of six middle-aged enthusiasts are responsible for keeping this tradition alive. A number of the younger Tuladhars have expressed an interest in learning; though many of the elders voice approval in the idea, no classes were actually held. My informants aptly summed up their reasons for playing this devotional music. In order of importance, they mentioned: making puṇya, the good of singing the gods' names, and the enjoyment of singing. The Newar JnanaMala Bhajan, with its livelier compositions and understandable lyrics, seems to be capturing the dominant Tuladhar interest in devotional music.

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<sup>1</sup>Some Tuladhars make it a point to invite the entire bājan to their houses for a snack during the month.

<sup>2</sup>The Dhāpa playing in Naradevi died over 15 years ago.

Plate 109: Dhāpa Bājan Players



Plate 110: Halimani Buye  
Grain Maṇḍala

# 15. HALUMANI BUYE ON SAKIMILĀ PUṆHI

On many of the full moon evenings during the year, Newar Buddhists make special devotional efforts such as lighting lamps around local chaityas and chanting texts such as the Nāmasangīti in small groups. On this particular full moon (called Sakimilā after Saki, the vegetable arum eaten for medicinal purposes on this day), such efforts are amplified upon. The chief activity is the construction of a kalash/aṣṭamaṅgala design with food grains on consecrated ground before a chaitya or other shrine. In 1981, there were twelve different neighborhood groups in Asan who joined to make separate offerings.

After a leader collects contributions from neighbors and buys the different types of grains, individuals begin to create the shapes. Once the devotional activities (chanting, pūjā offerings, etc. ) done before the grain design are finished, the pattern is destroyed and the grains distributed as prasād. This evening is one of the few times that immediate neighbors join in a single communal festival. Although most of the groups were homogenous, several were composed of both Hindus and Buddhists.

The Tuladhar bājan's grain kalash is by far the most elaborate celebration in Kathmandu, with the grain design area measuring ten feet by six feet and shaped artfully. Many Tuladhar families also send special offerings to add to the elaborate pūjā. The spectacle draws a large crowd so that the bājan plays longer, but in the same style as described above.

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## 16. GAHALBA DYA WORSHIP

On every day between Kartik Puṇhi and Sakimila Puṇhi, some households suspend wick lamps called alam mata from long bamboo poles erected on their rooftops. Both Hindus and Buddhists follow the this custom and make the lamp offerings each morning and evening to "Gahalba Dya".

The identity of this deity is subject to varying interpretations. Most believe that the dya is the triangular peak Phurbi Chyachu which is often visible in the valley during this season. Others say it is really Siva, or Vishnu.<sup>1</sup> The Buddhists share the confusion regarding the identity of "gahalba dya"; one Tuladhar, an old Lhasa trader, said that he once heard that a famous tantric siddha still lived up in triangle-shaped mountain.

In Asan, both Shresthas (55%) and Tuladhars (30%) put up special poles for this period in 1981. However, among the Tuladhars who did so, most (85%) put up new Tibetan-style prayer flags called jaṇḍa that they leave up throughout the year.<sup>2</sup>

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## 17. BĀLĀCATURDĀŚĪ

The key activity on this day is pūjā for the recently departed of one's family. This can be done at Svayambhū in the form of pradakṣiṇā around the whole hill, called "goca wanegu" in Newari.

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<sup>1</sup>The latter identification is supported by this same period being a set time when all Vaisnavas should visit the Valley's "Group of Four" Vishnu-Nārāyan temples.

<sup>2</sup>Most of these Tuladhars had former connections to Tibet.

Alternatively, many Hindus and Buddhists go to Paśupati for a two hour pradakṣiṇā around the hillside opposite the main temple, a trip linking every major shrine there and said to be in the model of Mt. Kailash, Siva's Himalayan abode. This ancient course, marked and maintained by guthis from the Jyāpu, Tamrakar, and Kansakar communities, was trod by many thousands in 1981, including twelve groups of Asan Tuladhars. This route is set up so that the devotees can make large amounts of punya at hundreds of shrines in the name of the deceased. Most of these groups also called their family guruju to do a special pūjā to "Ban Kālī", at the southern edge of the area, as described in the Vajrayāna texts (Vajrācārya 1982: 134).

This event is the only major event that links Paśupati with the Newar Buddhist communities of Kathmandu.

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#### 18. YO MARI PUṆHI

All Newars observe this festival day on the full moon that marks the end of grain drying and storage after the fall harvest. Tuladhar landlords expect payment by their tenants after this day.

Newars offer special steamed cakes (mari) stuffed with various sweetmeats (especially yo, "figs," hence this name) to the paddy storage bin. These offerings, it is hoped, will safeguard the grains, even multiply them. Yo Mari is also thought to be of medicinal value for fortifying individuals for the cold season ahead and families eat them for their evening meal.

The children of Asan also make rounds from house to house to solicit donations of yo mari, singing jingles as they go. One example

will suffice to indicate the spirit that pervades this day:

Yo mari is pointed  
 And dark within;  
 Yours will be sweet if you give some  
 Bad tasting if you don't.  
 She is young who gives  
 Only old hags do not;  
 If you do not quickly give us yo mari  
 We will piss in your rice grinder!

Newar language activists have chosen this day, with its tradition of begging, to solicit donations for its projects.

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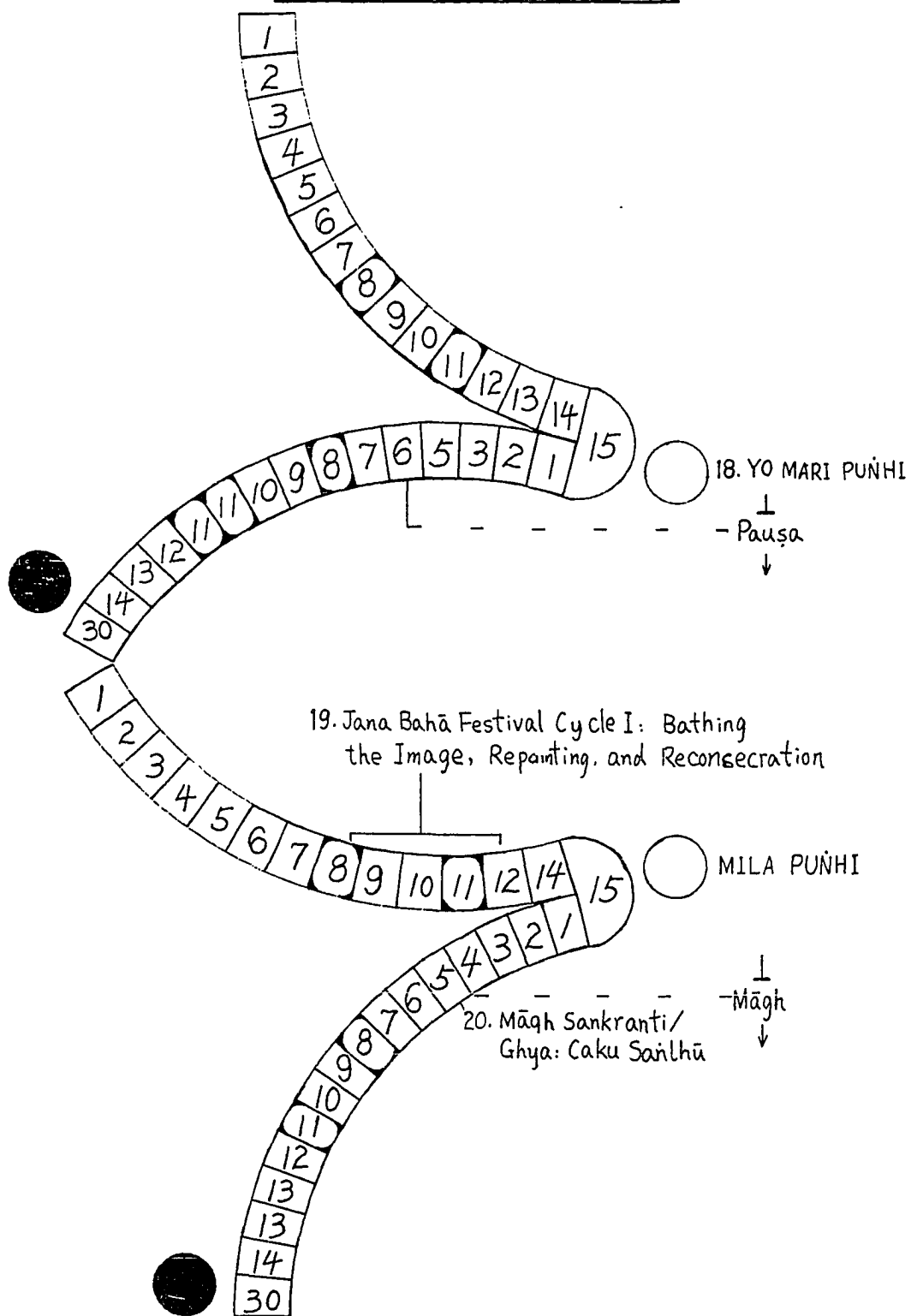
#### 19. JANA BAHĀ FESTIVAL CYCLE I: BATHING THE IMAGE, REPAINTING, AND RECONSECRATION

The festival cycle of Avalokiteśvara at Jana Bahā is by far the most elaborate in Kathmandu. The full yearly course of preparation, drawing the moveable image through the streets, and returning to the temple usually takes over four months. We have already mentioned that Jana Bahā Dya is by far the most popular deity among the Newars of Kathmandu, both Buddhist and Hindu. Although the ritual procedures are the responsibility of the Vajrācāryas and Sākyas of the bahā, the Urāy are active as patrons, workers, and in witnessing the events. Because Locke (1980) has extensively documented this festival, we will only outline the major activities briefly and from the point of view of Tuladhar devotionism.

The cycle starts anew with the bathing ceremony on the śukla aṣṭamī of Paus. The senior priest removes the jīv ("spirit") of the deity from the image and places it in a golden kalash vessel. After the Royal Kumārī comes to witness the proceedings, the image is carried to a special bathing platform in the bahā. Following offerings to the guardian deities of the four directions, a large bali



Figure VII-8: Festival Calendar Section:

Yo Mari Punhi to Magh Sankranti

offering to pacify local spirits is set out. After all dress and ornaments are removed (except for a loin cloth), over ten different ablutions are poured over the image. During all of these pourings, Kansakars play pañtā horns in accompaniment. For these ceremonies, the bahā courtyard is always crowded; most Tuladhars have seen this event many times.

The next day, the image is placed on the north side of the bahā courtyard. For the next six days, Vajrācāryas repaint the image in small sections.

According to Vajrācārya informants, the full moon of Paus is the birthday of all Bodhisattvas. The bathing and repainting are preparatory, then, for the yearly "rebirth" of Avalokiteśvara. After the newly repainted image is returned to the temple, the rituals of consecration, called daśa saṃskāra, are begun. In a long ritual process (1980: 15 hours), the image receives the standard life-cycle rituals up to adulthood.<sup>1</sup>

As part of re-establishing the image, it receives the eight different consecrations that the Vajrācārya receives. The final, private pūjās conclude by re-establishing Avalokiteśvara as the "tongue of Herukasamvara (Locke 1980: 221)."

For the next four days, the image is kept at the temple door and laymen come in great numbers to make special offerings. After the image is then restored to its normal place inside, its next movement begins with the ratha jātrā several months later. We return to this

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<sup>1</sup>These dual-sex rituals are commonly cited by Tuladhars as the basis for saying that a bodhisattva has both sexes, or are neither male or female.

Plate 111: Jana Bahā Festival I: Bathing the Image



Plate 112: Holi Pranksters



in the course of our calendrical presentation.

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## 20. MĀGH SANKRANTI/ GHYA: CĀKU SANLHŪ

This day marks the end of the inauspicious month of Paus and is considered the coldest day of the year. Several practices are done to promote health. A purificatory bath, ideally at the Sankamol tīrtha, is prescribed and a mustard oil bath is recommended. Finally, Tuladhars prepare foods having medicinal value for the cold season. They are made of solidified ghya: ("clarified butter"), molasses, and sesame seeds.

This day is also the time of a large nakhā: feast for which married-out daughters return to their natal homes.

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## 21. SRĪ PAÑCĀMĪ

According to Hindu mythology, this day marks the birthday of Sarasvati, a goddess who is the daughter of Siva and Durga, wife of Brahmā, patroness of learning and the fine arts. The day this goddess is singled out for pūjā offerings is also regarded as the first day of spring. According to Newar tradition, Sarasvati visits the Valley on this pañcāmī day.

The most-visited shrine is the stupa on Mañjuśrī hill behind Svayambhū.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Because there is no image besides a stupa with an accentuated shrine to Padmapani Avalokiteśvara here, it is tempting to conclude that this festival represents another "Hinduization" of an older Buddhist cult. Some Tuladhars identified the goddesses as in fact one

Whatever the intellectual understanding might be, Newar Buddhists and Hindus come to this shrine to obtain divine assistance in learning. Many are students who must face school examinations soon; parents often take their children here for the "first writing", an event prescribed according to age. (Six years old is an inauspicious time.)

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## 22. BHĪMSEN AṢṬAMĪ (/EKĀDASHĪ)

Newar guṭhis in both the Hindu and Buddhist communities worship Bhimsen with special pūjās at his major temple in town on either of these two days in the month of Magh.

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## 23. ŚIVA RĀTRI

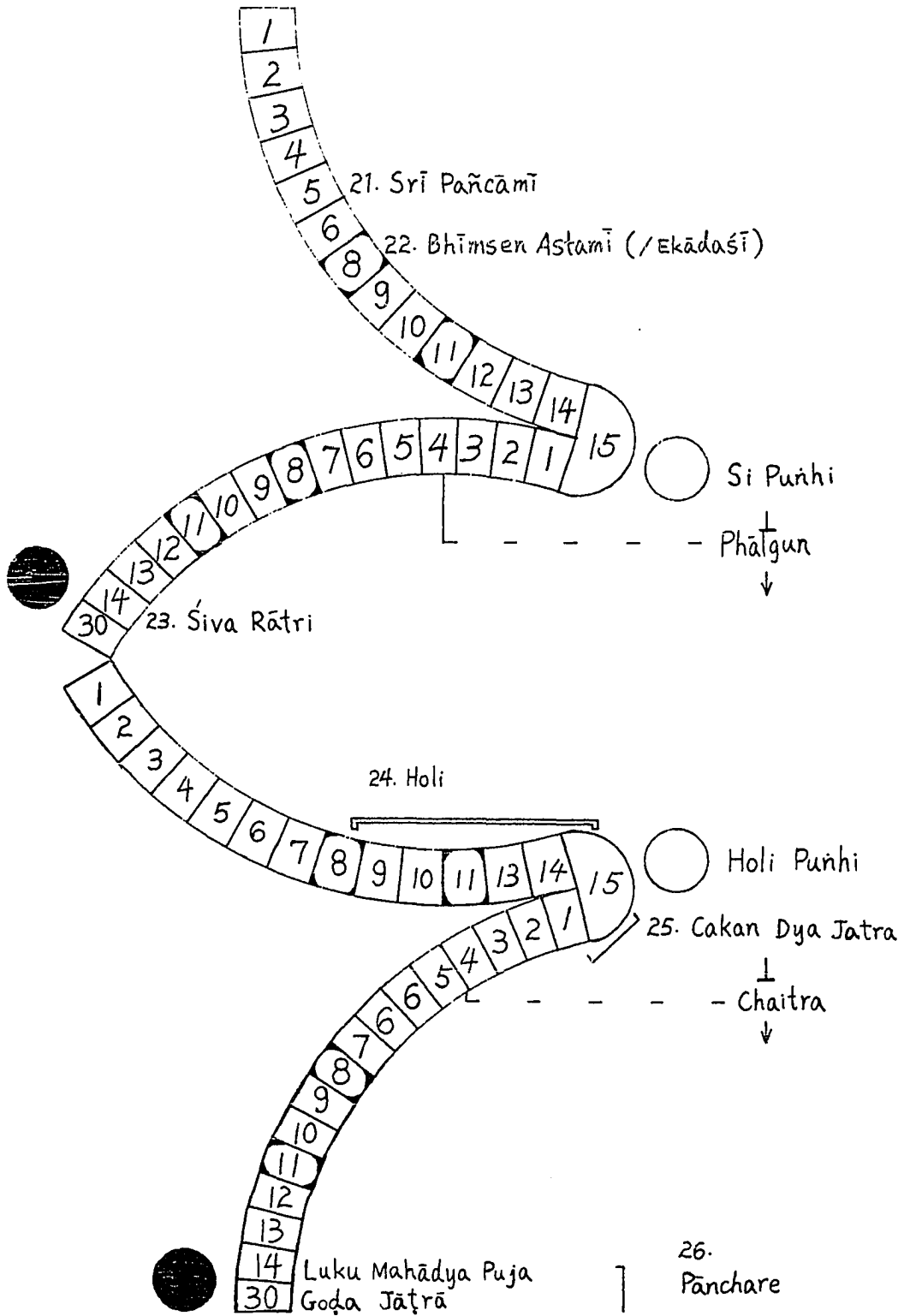
For the weeks around this day before the new moon of Phalgun, the Kathmandu Valley is inundated by Indian pilgrims and sādhus, the latter of whom go from shop to shop seeking alms. Although the focus of activity is Pasupati where a temporary market is set up to meet the various needs of the pilgrims, very few Kathmandu merchants have connections with this festival. While Hindu Newars make a special effort to go to Pasupati on this day, the Newar Buddhists also make it a point not to go, a fact corroborated by our surveys.

All Kathmandu Newars consider Śiva Rātri to be the last of the

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of Mañjuśrī's wives. However, latter Buddhist traditions clearly incorporated Sarasvatī herself into the Buddhist pantheon (Wayman 1977: 246 ff). We have already noted that Sarasvatī is often present in the bahās.

**Figure VII-9: Festival Calendar Section:**  
**Sri Pañchāmī to Pāñhare**



bitter cold days in the winter season. All day long, children on the streets beg for donations to buy wood for building evening bonfires in their neighborhoods. Courtyard neighbors gather for a short time to warm themselves and share some snacks. The fire in Dagu Bahā draws most residents and is a time of socializing and children's playing.

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#### 24. HOLI PUNHI

This day is the culmination of a weeklong period begun with the placement--formerly by the king-- of a tiered bamboo pole (called cir) outside the old Palace. As with the well-documented accounts of the day in India (Marriot 1968), life in Asan is disrupted by pranks and water attacks (usually water-filled balloons) which are usually done by teenagers. During this festival the streets of Asan go slightly less traveled as the women and elders go out less to avoid the play.

On Punhi, groups of young men singing bawdy songs roam the streets (on foot or in vehicles) to molest others playfully and welcome their own further dowsings with colored powders and water.<sup>1</sup>

For most Asan youth, the Holi play is now centered on the rooftops so that by mid-day Dagu Bahā becomes a waterballoon battlefield permeated by a spirit of playful exchange. The spirit of the normal being suspended even affected the young children of the bahā as they played at "being religious" in a comic and satirical

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<sup>1</sup>Older informants say that this is the only surviving indication of the festival's formerly more overt focus on hostile/flirtatious male--female encounters such as parlaying double entendre suggestions and more aggressive person-directed waterplay.

manner: making mock processions with one boy acting as a "devout" pūjā doer really desperate for money. In 1982, one Tuladhar boy acted out the role of a greedy "guruju".

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## 25. CAKAN DYA

The Tuladhars make a special point of celebrating the procession of Cakan Dya through their neighborhood. This consists of a large image of Dipanakara Buddha, constructed so a man can stand inside (as in Samyak), accompanied by the Pañca Tal Bājan and a pallanquin bearing a gold-lettered PrajñāPāramitā Sutra.

On the second day of the festival, the procession passes through Asan and stops outside of Ta Che Baha where "Dipankara" walks on seven chalk-demarcated lotuses to a Dharmadhātu maṇḍala and back again, a ceremony which is also done elsewhere in town.

As in other pallanquin-style festivals, Tuladhar families can request that the procession pause to receive offerings, a task specifically supported by several Tuladhar guṭhis (as we saw in Chapter IV).

Old Newar tradition identifies this deity as Singhasatabahu, the hero of the famous Newar (and pan-Buddhist) avadāna recorded in the Pali and Sanskrit literature. The connection of this figure with Dipankara Buddha, however, is not clear, as local Tuladhars also call the tall image a "Bodhisattva."

This procession, occurring the day after Holi Punhi, has come to be treated as a wandering Holi group so that local residents throw water balloons and red powder at it. The effect is that the pūjās are



often disrupted and the festival attendants repeatedly routed. As one organizer said to me, "These balloons are destroying the jātrā. "

The Cakan Dya Jātrā is a remarkable case-study in Hindu-Buddhist relations in Kathmandu.

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## 26. PĀNCHARE

There are three different components to this three day festival period.

### Luku Mahādyā Pūjā

The first is the pisāca ("evil spirit") dimension that Newars relate to Śiva. On this day (which also correlates with the planet Pisāca's inauspicious location), this class of beings is thought to be restless and active. Śiva is worshipped as their overlord to gain his control over them.

On the evening of caturdaśī, families living on the same courtyard join to worship the Śiva shrine in their midst called "Luku Mahādyā".<sup>1</sup> Households presents pancopacāra offerings to Luku Mahādyā at this god's domicile which is either a normally covered hole or a series of stones.

In Dagu Bahā, the local children clean these stones, as directed by the resident guruju, and smear a fresh coating of purificatory red clay/cow dung mixture around the site. Later, the senior Vajrācārya performs a guru maṇḍala pūjā there with the woman of the wealthiest

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<sup>1</sup>As discussed in Chapter III.

Plate 113: Pēnchare (1): Luku Mahādyā Pūjā in Dagu Bahā

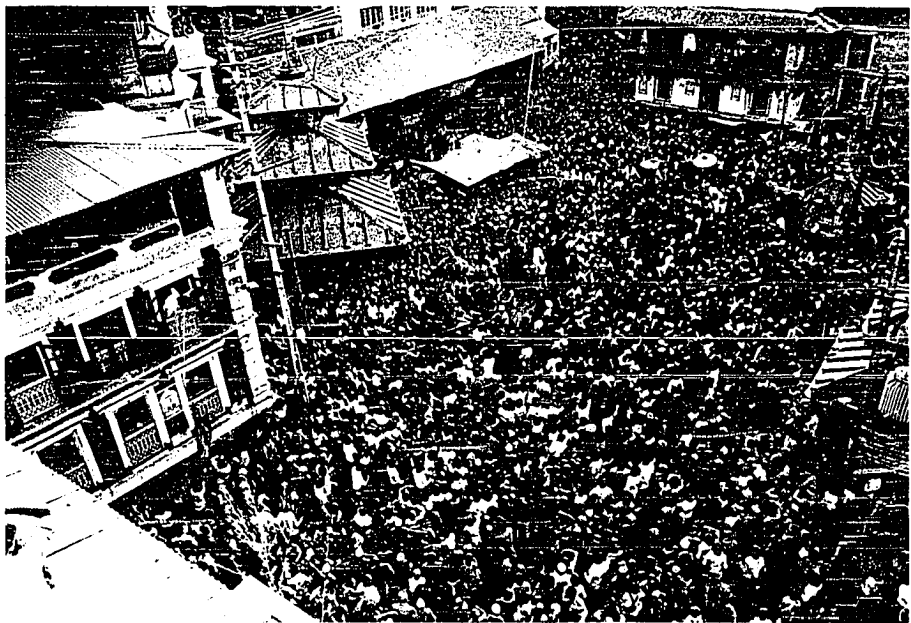
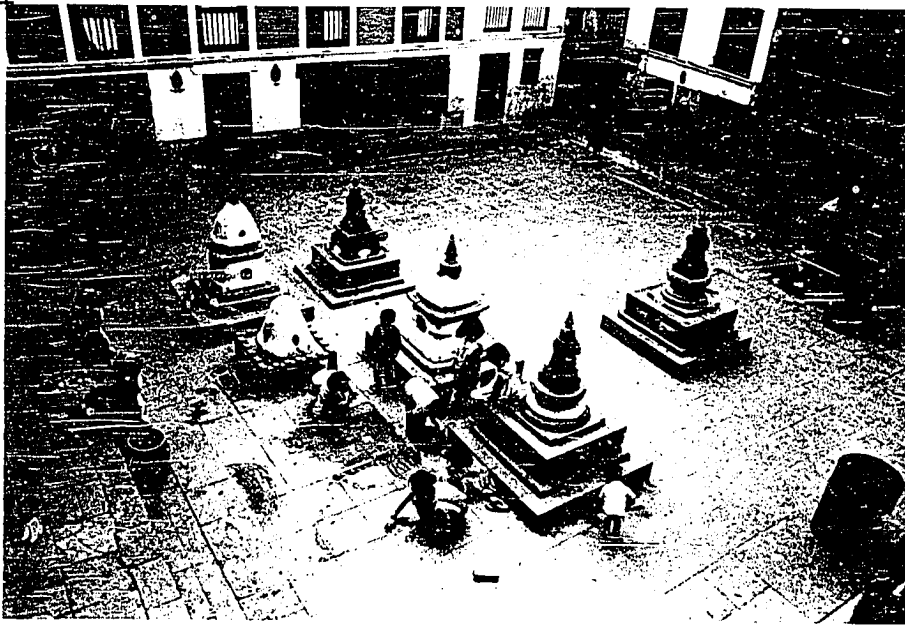


Plate 114: Dya Lvayekegu in Asan Tol

family acting as chief jajmān. After all of the household representatives (usually women) come to the site, he then offers one large pancopacāre pūjā from their merged pūjā plates. Everyone present then comes to take ṭikā, receive prasād, and give dāna to the guruju.

On this day, then, Buddhist laymen make offerings to Śiva but under the identity of a demon overlord who resides in the refuse pit. As such, the yearly pūjā is a reminder of this polemical Buddhist statement that asserts Siva's reduced status.

On this evening, Tuladhar families call their married-out daughters home for the nakha feast held each year during this festival. This theme is also incorporated into the festival of Dya Lwākegu, described below.

### Goda Jātrā

Formerly this was a royal procession to the Bhadrakali pitha outside of town to the east (Anderson 1971: 266). now the government sponsors horseracing and modern military display (troops blowing up buildings, helicopter formations, etc.) in the Tundikhel parade ground. The Newars of Asan usually try to see what they can from their rooftops.

### Dya Lwākegu

During Pāñchare, devotees associated with most of the major mātrkā temples and other major goddess shrines around Kathmandu take out pallanquin processions that visit many neighborhoods in and around

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<sup>1</sup>As discussed in Chapter III.

Kathmandu.<sup>1</sup> Local residents can make offerings to these goddesses by appearing on the street, pūjā plate in hand, when the pallanquin comes near.

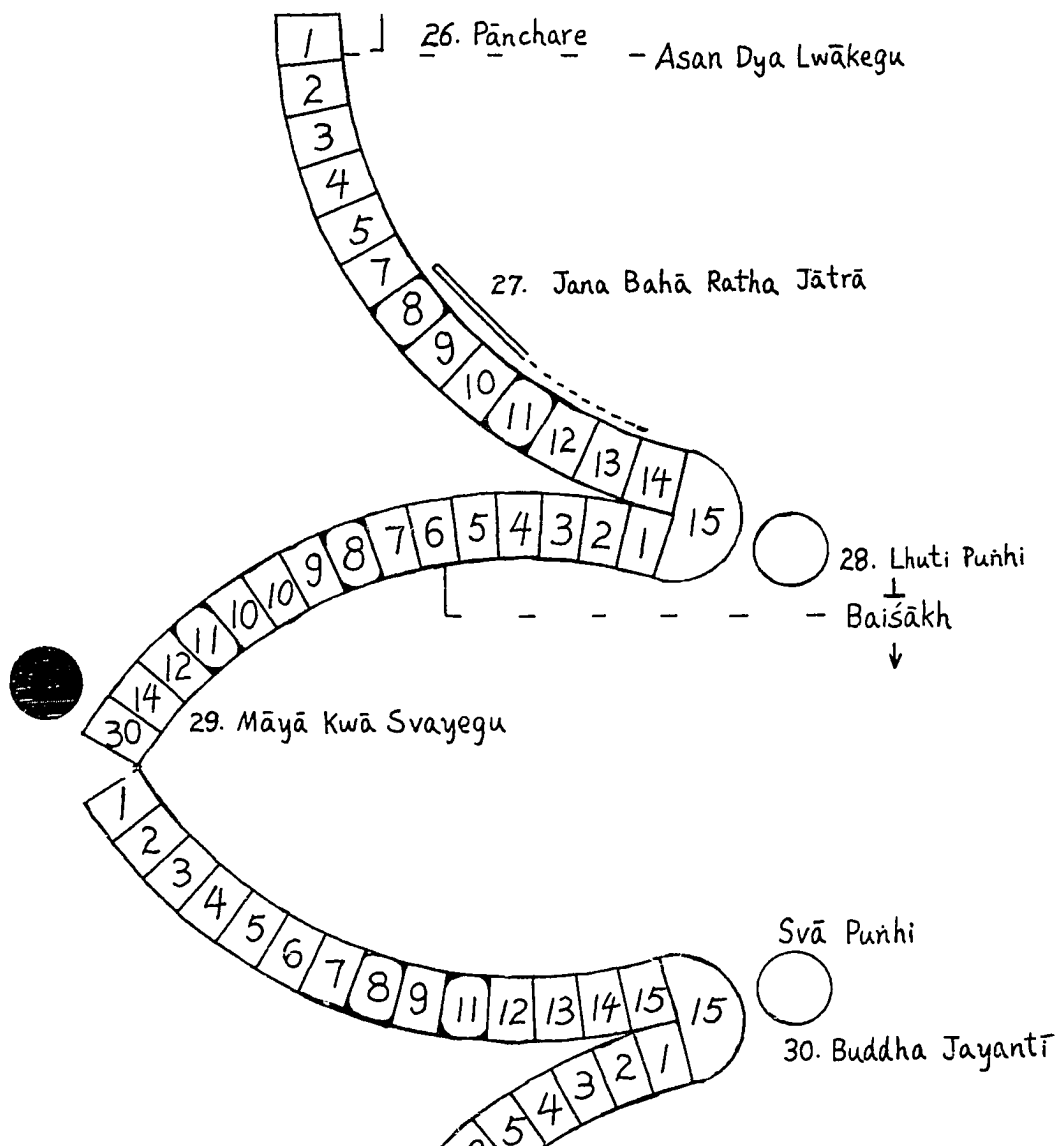
Dya Lwākegu is the festival performance unique to Asan in which the aṣṭa mātṛkās are worshipped and given offerings. On the narrative level, the festival performance in Asan mirrors the activities of the town residents. Just as mortal Newar sisters meet at their natal homes for feasting during this festival, it is natural that the "sister" mātṛkā goddesses must also meet during the festival. Dya Lwākegu is the meeting of three sisters: Bhadra Kālī, Wotu Ajimā, and Kangesvari. According to the local mythology, of the eight mātṛkās around Kathmandu, Lhuti Ajimā (Indrāyanī, northwest of town) was once the poorest sister, a widow with 10 children. In former times, she and her children were shown disrespect at a family gathering and the quarrel that arose led to continual family discord thereafter.

For the festival, Jyāpus from each neighborhood where these temples are located organize the pallanquin processions. The images must be carried in a durable wooden pallanquin (kha:) using long bamboo poles. As the goddess is moved, one man must continually twirl an umbrella over the pallanquin roof and bājan music must be played; and the men should dance as part of the deity's outing and entertainment. In modern times, each group wears a Nepalese hat, topi, of a distinctive color to mark their affiliation with one of these goddesses. Although the pallanquin movements are rough and

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<sup>1</sup>Some must honor tenancy agreements and perform specific roles; others have voluntary guthi ties.

**Figure VII-10: Festival Calendar Section:**  
Dya Lwākegu to Sva Puñhi



ungainly, the atmosphere is very festive. Occasionally the overflowing emotion of the sometimes tipsy celebrants adds a rowdy edge to the processions.

The drama in central Asan<sup>1</sup> begins when Wotu Ajimā's pallanquin is carried into the center and placed down. Soon after, Bhadra Kālī's group enters and sets the pallanquin down close by. Drumming and dancing draw crowds on the ground and to every available vantage point in the houses overlooking the bazaar. Both groups compete to show better form in drumming, dancing, and celebration. Households on the market square throw sweets as offerings to the pallanquins and on the ground level the pūjā <-> prasād exchanges continue at a fast pace. Finally, the climax begins as the Kangeśvarī pallanquin is borne into the center with a man standing astride the rooftop holding a lighted torch. Men from the other two groups take similar places on their pallanquins, also holding torches. The Kangeśvarī group makes one pradakṣiṇā of the two stationary goddesses. At the end of the second circumambulation, "Kangeśvarī" exchanges torches with "Bhadrakālī" and then, again, with "Wotu Ajimā" before immediately leaving Asan, a sequence lasting only two minutes. The exchange of torches, say informants, represents the brief conversation between the three goddesses. Kangeśvarī, the youngest sister, still resents her older sisters for the family quarrel and refuses to stay any longer in their company.

For this performance, Asan is transformed into a theatre

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<sup>1</sup>This festival drama has been recorded on 16mm film and annotated with ethnographic commentary (Lewis 1980; 1982).

absolutely packed with people: men on the ground level, women filling the upper windows and rooftops looking at the sacred drama. The roar of the crowd when the successful exchanges are made unites the market community in its worship of these powerful goddesses.

For this festival, Tuladhars are a prime audience (with the Shresthas) and pūjā patrons for a festival performance totally in the hands of the Jyāpus. In Dya Lwākegu we see that Asan, like the royal palace, is also a major center for the enactment of sacred drama.

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## 27. JANA BAHĀ JĀTRĀ II: RATHA PROCESSION

About two weeks before the festival begins, Newar carpenters begin to assemble the six-storey, four-wheeled ratha that bears the image of Padmapani Avalokiteśvara.<sup>1</sup> On the śukla aṣṭamī of Chaitra after the Vajrācārya purohit removes half of the image's jīv to a kalash kept in the temple, the Padmapani image is taken out from Jana Bahā in a pallanquin procession that passes through Asan on the way to the completed ratha assembled behind Rani Pokhari. Once installed, the Rāj Guru's guard, representing the King and bearing his sword, must be present before the pulling can begin. (This is true for every succeeding day as well.)

The form of the ratha requires an analysis more extensive than is possible here. Briefly noted, it is an elaborately worked symbol of the Mahāyāna Buddhist cosmos, with deities installed at many points,

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<sup>1</sup>According to Chattopadhyay, one Urāy caste once had the responsibility for making the wheels (1923).

all in the form of a three-dimensional maṇḍala with the compassionate Bodhisattva at the center. The placement of attendants and other functionaries is a simulacra for reading the social order in the Newar community: a Vajrācāryas minority being pulled by the lay masses, surrounded by an edifice created by the merchant elite's patronage.

The ratha is pulled through the streets by means of long hawsers attached to the axles. Two "conductors" sit on the main beams to direct the efforts which are accompanied by characteristic chants (hainse !, hainse !, hainse !, (and once moving) ha: , ha: , ha:) . It is an old tradition that men from the Tol to which the chariot will be drawn do that day's pulling. But this is no longer the case in Asan as now the pulling is done by hundreds of young boys from all over town. The jātrā's official itinerary calls for three stops that ideally should entail three days: in Asan, outside the Hanuman Dhoka Palace, and Lagan. Unfailingly, the ratha will make mid-point stops due to breakdown or deliberate stoppages by local devotees who desire the Bodhisattva's immediate presence in their neighborhood. If the ratha wheel strikes a house, for example, the pullers will usually call a halt to the day's pulling.

On the first day, the ratha should reach central Asan Tol. As it moves through the streets in Bhotahītī tol on the way there, Tuladhar families light offering lamps that hang permanently from the house eaves for this purpose. Once the ratha is stopped, families (especially women) come to make offerings to the deity, a transaction handled by the specially designated attendants from Jana Bahā. Lay devotees also light sets of 108 small wick lamps (deva) on the ground in front of the ratha. This form of pūjā continues night and day



Plate 115: Jana Bahā Ratha Jātrā in Asan Tol



Plate 116: Jana Bahā Ratha Jātrā: Devotees Handing Up Offerings

until the ratha is pulled again the following afternoon.<sup>1</sup>

On this first evening of the Jātrā, the royal family usually sends a representative into Asan to make special offerings. As the military police guard and clear the way, the a black limosine stops near the ratha, the representative steps out and makes a quick offering, takes prasād, then drives off into the night. On this evening there is also a special gathering of the Asan JñānaMālā Bhajan; most of the finest Tuladhar musicians take part in a usually extended session.

Early that next morning, Tuladhars call upon their gurus to perform special pūjās to Padmapani, special guthis meet to chant sūtras, and most Asan residents come to make pūjā offerings and for darshan. One Tuladhar merchant keeps a large butter lamp lit in his storefront throughout the day.

The ratha also brings an element of play for the local children. Boys crouch below the ratha to catch coins that fall and others climb unimpeded on the ratha framework. On this day in 1982, we counted over sixty children on and around the ratha at one time.

The pulling proceeds to Makhan Tol near the royal palace for the second designated stop and then to Lagan, in southeast Kathmandu, for the third. Many Tuladhars go each day to make offerings to Padmapani wherever the ratha stops.

Once the pulling is completed, a special procession forms to bring the image back to Jana Bahā in a pallanquin. Many Tuladhars

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<sup>1</sup>In 1982, we counted over 300 sets of deva offerings.

join in accompanying the image back to the its residence in their midst.

The ratha jātrā of Avalokiteśvara employs the largest conveyance of all the festivals in Kathmandu town.<sup>1</sup> Like all festivals of this kind, the deity's movement through the city streets affords a chance for worship to all the sick and aged who cannot visit Jana Bahā. The mere proximity to Karuṇāmaya is felt to be a beneficent influence so that during the festival Tuladhars feel that the deity is closer to them. Even in modern times, devotees still ask the deity to protect them from the diseases that trouble them.<sup>2</sup>

We must also appreciate this large scale festival as a time when the divinity's attendants, in a manner of speaking, "pass the hat" for devotional offerings that support them and their traditions.

Finally, this festival draws both Buddhist and Hindu devotees. Locke (1980) has drawn a full portrait of how the Brahmanical tradition has mounted its own re-identification of the deity under the name of "Macchendranāth", a Vaisnava saint. Although this imposed identity is clear to Buddhist Newars who disparage the attempt and avoid using this name, it still encourages Hindus to patronize the cult. From our rough surveys in Asan, however, we were surprised at how few Hindus (about 15% of the total) actually made deva offerings to the deity.

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<sup>1</sup> As Locke points out, its order clearly mirrors and post-dates the larger festival to the same deity in Patan (1980: 243).

<sup>2</sup> It is probably no accident that the festival takes place right before the onset on the hot season, a time when epidemic diseases were once especially virulent.

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## 28. LHUTI PUṆHI

This full moon is the time for Buddhists to visit the Valley peak pilgrimage site of Jāma Cho (Nepali: Nārgarjun). Each year, several thousand devotees from town make a three hour walk up to the hilltop which rises 5,000 feet above Kathmandu and has a large stupa on it.

Hindus on this day go to Bālāju to visit the "sleeping Vishnu" there but very few Tuladhars do so.

Two old Naradevi Tuladhar guṭhis also bring up special silver and brass repousse images that fit on the stone images of Amitābha. They also hang a gild paṭa from the stupa's stambha, supply water to pilgrims, and pay a Vajrācārya priest to perform a sata pūjā and a homa pūjā.<sup>1</sup>

This is the best example of a festival in the Kathmandu Valley uniting the different Buddhist ethnic groups. Tamangs, Tibetans, and Newars all share in putting up the decorations and in the rituals which start very early in the morning.<sup>2</sup>

Informants say that the number of people coming to this festival has definitely increased over the past ten years. They think that the motorable road recently built by the army and the increases in motor

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<sup>1</sup>By 1979, both guṭhis had declined to the extent that only three members came to assist the Pālā.

<sup>2</sup>The Tibetans hang numerous lines of new prayer flags and whitewash the aṇḍa of the stupa. Tamang lamas chant from the Tibetan Canon and groups from outside the Valley merge in doing pradakṣiṇā of the stupa to create a variegated scene.

transportation in the Valley are the reasons.<sup>1</sup> This finding is another example of modern changes expanding individual choice, leading to an increase in religious participation.

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### 29. MĀYĀ KṠĀ SVAYEGU ("Seeing One's Mother's Face")

If one's mother is still alive, her children, including married out daughters, make special gifts of clothes and sweets to her. As mentioned under life cycle rites, Tuladhars do not celebrate a woman's birthday: It is only as a mother that she receives special recognition.

If the mother is dead, her chief male mourner may go to mātā tīrtha, a pool in the southwest corner of the Valley two hours walk outside of Kathmandu. Both Hindu and Buddhist Newars make this trip, hoping, as one myth recounts, to "see their mother's face" reflected in a small pool where they may make śrāddha offerings. The family guruju should also come to receive dāna on this day.

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### 30. BUDDHA JAYANTĪ

The celebration of this day marked by the Theravada school as the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha is not an ancient Newar tradition (as we noted under Gunla above.) The observances at Svayambhū and in town reflect the degree to which this movement has

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<sup>1</sup>In 1982, we counted over 35 cars and 50 motorcycles on the hilltop by 10 AM.

made an impact on the Newar tradition.

The older Newari name for this day, Svā Puṇhi ("Full moon of flowers"), refers to the custom of families displaying their potted plants, normally kept on the rooftops, in the freshly cleaned courtyards. This was the day that was once the time for bahā pūjā processions by different neighborhood groups which would visit all of the bahās in the town.

Nowadays, Buddha Jayantī is a time for display: garlanded pictures outside of Buddhist houses and strings of five-color flags across the streets that are neo-Theravadin imports.<sup>1</sup>

Svayambhū is the main focal point for cultural performances and although the Theravadins are responsible for initiating special observances here, now the Vajrācāryas and Tibetan lamas have their own ritual programs.

The Theravadins have a well-attended story telling session at Anandakuti Vihāra followed by a group pūjā offering to the Svayambhū stupa. A relic obtained from Sri Lanka soon after the movement was recognized in Nepal (1948) is put on display at the Anandakuti Vihāra for this day only; every three years it is taken in a horse-drawn carriage through the streets of Kathmandu, along the Gai Jātrā route. At Dharmakīrti Vihāra, the monastery usually puts up a special display of images for laymen.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This flag was developed in 19th Century Sri Lanka, and popularized by the MahaBodhi Society (Wickremeratna 1969). Some Tuladhars identify with an older Newar tradition of flags having the five colors of the Pañca Buddha

<sup>2</sup>In 1982, they set up a room-size relief map of the geography of north India in the Buddha's lifetime; lay guides explained the map to interested laymen.

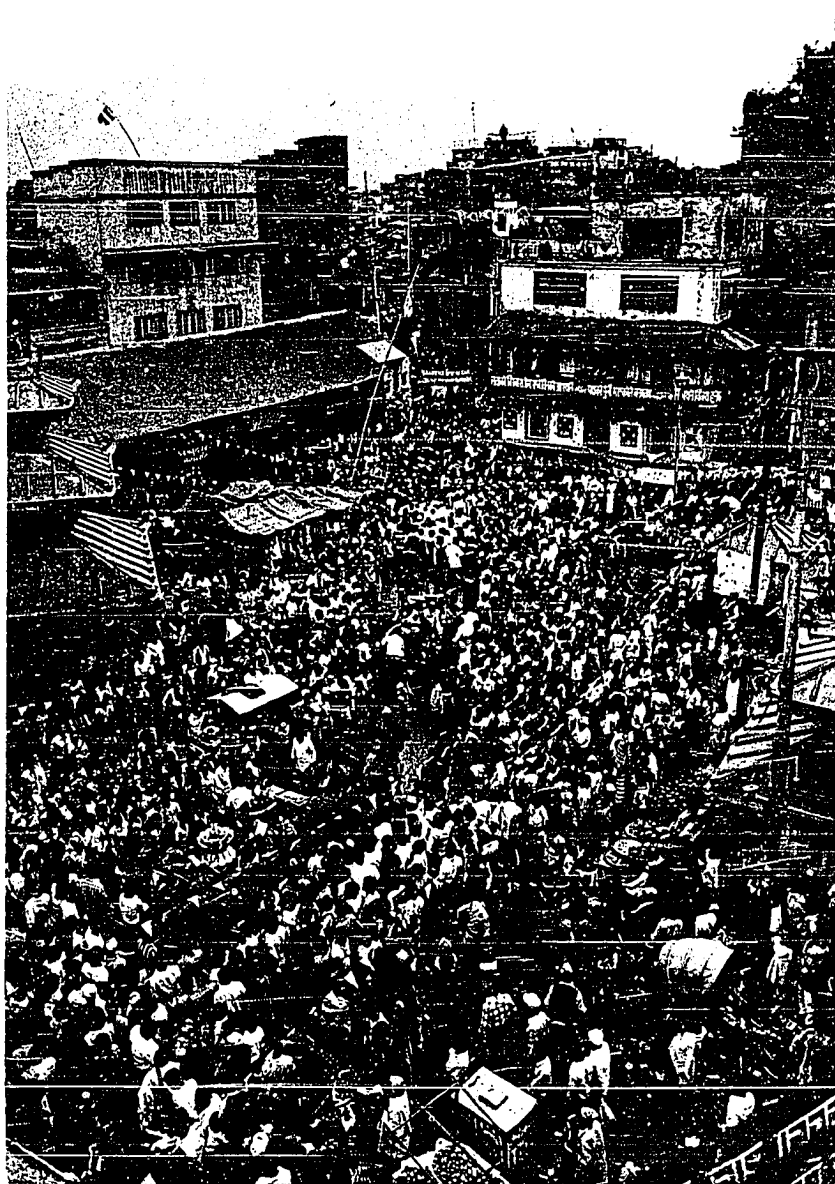


Plate 117: Buddha Jayantī: Theravāda Relic Procession in Asan Tol

The Tibetan lamas of Maitreya gompa play musical offerings and do a group pradakṣiṇā of the stupa.

Finally, Vajrācāryas from Kathmandu perform a special pūjā in which five Vajrācārya masters (portraying the Pañca Buddhas) dance before all of the major shrines on the hilltop. At the end, laymen make special offerings to them.

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In the evening at Dagu Bahā, family groups come out on the warm evening to light the lamps around the Asok Chaitya, do pradakṣiṇā around the entire chaitya complex, and make special offerings to the kwāpā dya attended by the senior Vajrācārya.

Tuladhars in a nearby Asan courtyard have recently started a yearly nighttime celebration on Jayantī. In an environment heavily decorated with Buddhist pictures, the middle age men of one family act as whistle-blowing referees for local children of both sexes who compete in games such as balloon boxing, tug of war, etc. . They award special prizes to the winners.<sup>1</sup>

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### 31. SITHI NAKHA

Sithi Nakha is recognized as the last festival of the year, the last nakha, and the start of the rice-planting season. All Newars are enjoined to eat wa:, a pulse flour pancake thought to be of medicinal

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<sup>1</sup>The funds for the prizes come from a collection box permanently nailed to a wall near the small courtyard stupa. Throughout the year, local families deposit their offering coins to the stupa in the box and once a year, on Buddha Jayantī, the box is opened.



value for the hot season.

On this day, the wells of Kathmandu were once cleaned and the nagas thought to inhabit them were worshipped. Although in 1982 offerings were seen at a few wells, not one well in Asan was cleaned. Since these are no longer drinking water sources, this decline seems to indicate a concomitant local disinterest in their sanctity.

The festival's chief religious action is the worship of Kumar, Śiva's son. A procession is usually taken out from the only major temple to Kumar in central Kathmandu near Jaisi Deval. This usually comes to Asan in the late night hours.<sup>1</sup> Tuladhars also make special offerings to their piku luku stone on this day, a spot associated with this god.

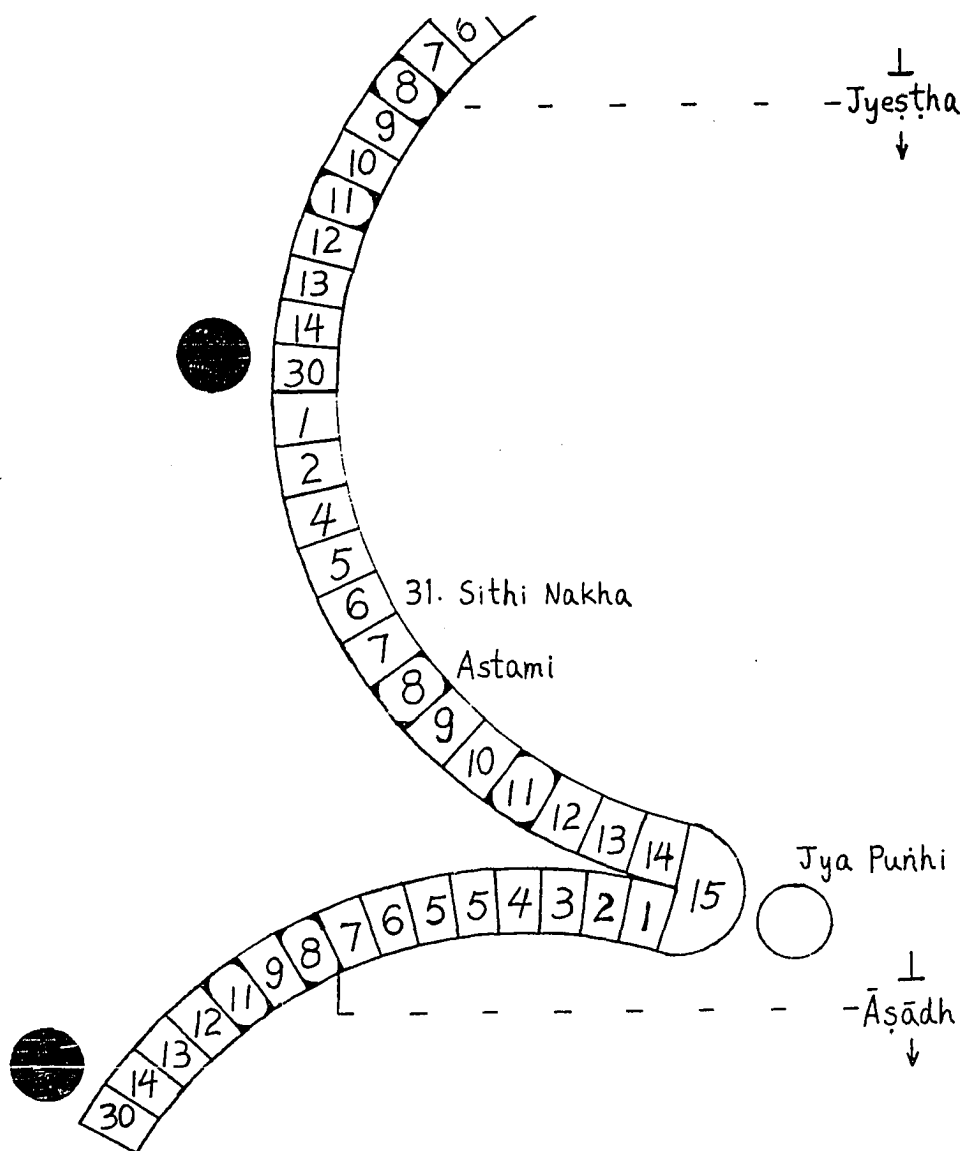
Sithi Nakha also marks the last day of a month during which families should worship their Digu Dyas at the shrines outside of the town. As discussed earlier, most Asan Tuladhars have joined a new group, the Digu Khya Samhiti, which now makes these offerings on a group basis.

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<sup>1</sup>In 1981, however, local disputes prevented the traditional guthi assigned the festival task from making its rounds of the city.

Figure VII-11: Festival Calendar Section:  
Sithi Nakha to Jya Purnhi



Summary on the Newar Festival Traditions in Asan

The remarkable elaboration of festival life is one distinctive feature of Newar culture. The welter of jātrās bespeaks of the wealth of the Valley, the religious devotion of its people, and the character of Newars cities as religious centers. The importance of festival observance is further indicated by the fact that forming processions is a highly developed art for the Newars. Many of the Tuladhar musical traditions are directed toward making communal outings which should reflect well on their social status and piety.

We should regard this agenda of festivals from several perspectives. First, comparing the pūjā lists and calendar of religious activities from those generated by Hodgson over 100 years ago, the loss of Buddhist order in the regular cycle of lunar observances and at points in festival schedule is clear. Still, out of devotion and fear of the deity's wrath if age-old customs are broken, festivals still dominate Newar life. The normal unfolding of the festival year exposes the city inhabitants to a vast array of mythic spectacles and convenient access to pūjās.

Festivals are also a time for those connected with a deity's shrine to collect revenues derived from pūjās. These collections provide at least one occasion for an especially high income that helps them maintain the traditions.

Over the course of a year, there is, on the average, one festival procession per week. We can distinguish four general types, though the largest jātrās often unite two or more components.

First, there are "deity excursions" that treat the dya to an

outing suitable to a king. These festivals are derived from there being so many temples in the Valley: since it is proper form for each deity to have one outing each year, groups must organize to do so. The rituals surrounding these are directed to propitiation and restoring the deity's power/purity (cf. Stanley 1977: 38).

A second type of Newar festival has the town residents acting out standard mythological scenarios, often imitating deities or performing divinely ordained activities. The circumambulations for Gai Jatra and Indra Jatra are of this nature.

A third type of festival is the mass pilgrimage to a special shrine for which devotees travel together for pūjā. We have seen that Asan Tol is a major landmark so that almost every procession to other points passes through the marketplace.

Displays are a fourth festival type. The Krishna Aṣṭamī, Buddha Jayantī, and Pañca Dān jātrās are the best examples.

These summary of festivals helps to characterize the nature of the religious tradition in Asan Tol. In Figure VII-12, we have organized the jātrās according to their Hindu-Buddhist character through their content and chief participants.

Figure VII-12 The Hindu-Buddhist Character of the Newar Festival Year

| Exclusively<br>Buddhist | Shared              |                   | Exclusively<br>Hindu<br>Guñlā: |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
|                         | SEPARATE<br>Program | SAME<br>Program   |                                |
|                         | Ganthan Muga        |                   | SaParu                         |
| Pañca Dān               |                     | Nāg Pañcāmī       |                                |
| Bahi Dya                | Krishna Aṣṭamī      | Bwaya Kwa Swayegu |                                |
| Buyegu                  | Indra Jātrā         | Saunti            | Tīj                            |
|                         | Mohini              | Cathā             |                                |
|                         | Holimani Buye       | Bala Caturdasī    |                                |
| Śi gha Jātrā            | Gahalba Dya         | Yo Mari Puñhi     |                                |
| Jana Bahā Dya Jātrā     |                     | Sri Pañcāmī       | Siva Ratri                     |
|                         | Bhīmsen Aṣṭamī      | Holi              |                                |
| Cakan Dya Jātrā         |                     | Pañcare           |                                |
|                         | Lhuti Puñhi         | Māyā Kwā Swayegu  |                                |
| Buddha Jayantī          |                     | Sithi Nakha       |                                |

Several other observations follow from this table. First, the great majority of jātrās are celebrated by all Newars. Although Hindus and Buddhists may have their own different ways of celebrating a festival (e.g. animal sacrifices at Mohini), these still constitute a broad current of shared cultural life. It is noteworthy that in most cases, the shared festivals involve the worship of deities that both traditions accept as good "practical religion" (Mandelbaum 1964). As we have already seen, for the Tuladhars to worship deities from the Indian tradition is consistent with textual orthodoxy.

Second, the exclusive festivals on either side are those that

express hierarchies untenable to the other-- i.e. the superiority of the Buddha over the Hindu gods, or vice versa. As we see in the next chapter, both traditions have doctrinal positions that subordinate the other under its own systems of cosmology and spiritual power.

Finally, the fact of the Newars preserving distinctly Buddhist jātrās should be underlined. The Bahā Buddhist tradition has survived through its festivals and this survival indicates the basis of its vitality: the Bodhisattvas and Buddhas are revered and respected above all other facts such as the declining practice of the Vajrācāryas. The magnitude of the current festival processions in Asan shows the clear dominance of the deities and cults of the Baha Buddhist tradition:

Figure VII-13: Magnitude of the Deities Who Pass Through Asan Tol

Wheeled rathas:

Jana Bahā Dya-Avalokiteśvara

-----  
Kumārī Jātrā

-----  
Theravadin Relic Carriage

Pallanquins:

Svayambhu (Amitabha)  
Cakan Dya  
Annapurna  
Krishna  
Śi Gha: Dya (Amitabha)  
Bhadra Kālī  
Kangeśvarī  
Wotu Ajimā

Hand-held Deities:

Phulpati-Talejū  
Changu Nārāyan  
Maitī Devī

---

Although the pluralistic Hindu-Buddhist cultural environment of Asan Tol is a fundamental characteristic of the festival traditions there,

Buddhist dominance emerges from the diversity, a fact we noted in our study of the religious geography,. In the following chapter we will consider Hindu-Buddhist relations again in our attempt to define and correctly understand Bahā Buddhism.

PART II:

BAHĀ BUDDHISM





CHAPTER VIII  
 "Baha Buddhism": Cultural Content, Social Organization,  
 and Relations with Newar Hinduism

In this Chapter we attempt a descriptive overview of Bahā Buddhism as a religious system. Our intention is to define the chief characteristics of Newar Buddhist tradition and note the continuities and contrasts with other Buddhist societies. In the second section, we describe the relationship between Newar Buddhism and Hinduism, focusing on caste, doctrine, and ritual.

Following the methods of historical anthropology, our description turns on a reconstruction of Bahā Buddhism in Malla times when this traditional order reached its cultural culmination. Though fractured in many ways today, this tradition still constitutes the underlying organization for contemporary Newar practice. We begin with a brief description of the society in which Baha Buddhism flourished and move to an analysis of its constituent parts: the Vajrācārya sangha, texts, the Vajrayāna hierarchy of practice, and the societal inter-relationships that supported this tradition.

Malla Nepal and Bahā Buddhism

The polity of Malla Nepal was based upon a feudalistic social order. Agricultural tenants were ruled by an aristocracy of nobles and priests who claimed ownership of the land and the right to extract a percentage of crops and occasional forced labor.<sup>1</sup> The Valley's

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<sup>1</sup>Slavery existed in Nepal until 1924 (Regmi 1978: 127). It is not clear how important slave labor was in Malla times.

kingdoms also derived a major income from taxes on long distance Indo-Tibetan trade dominated by a largely Buddhist merchant community. This community was prominent in Malla society and known for its wealth and landholdings.

The Urāy role in the cult of the royal family in the Kumar Pyekhan dance (discussed in the previous chapter) specifies the nature of their relationship to royalty. By dancing in the service of the goddess responsible for the security of the kingdom, the Uray expressed their alliance with royal power. The ritual also "says" that the wealth and power of the traders is at work for the well-being of the state; in return, the king acknowledged the high standing of the traders in society.

The royal priesthood was dominated by Brahmins. Although a few Vajracārya priests are also reputed to have been employed at the royal court, their predominant role was that of purohit for laymen who could afford their services. If contemporary census figures reflect earlier trends, there were approximately four times as many Vajracaryas as Brahmins (Allen 1973).

Both Brahmins and Vajracaryas derived their material support from land endowments, the latter through grants to the bahā sanghas, the former to major temples that they maintained.<sup>1</sup> Tenants farmed these lands and turned over half of the produce to their institutional landlords. They were also obligated to perform specific services in return for their tenancy.

Both groups were also employed as purohites. Although the

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<sup>1</sup>Hindu monasteries, mathas, were found in significant numbers only in Bhaktapur.

Vajrācārya seem to have been the predominant resort of most agriculturalists,<sup>1</sup> both had jajmāns in the merchant community.<sup>2</sup> Payments in kind for ritual services and dāna offerings made by laymen were also an important means of support, especially for Brahmins (see Wright 1958: 26). The wealthy classes provided the majority of this type of patronage. Thus, Bahā Buddhism developed in a feudalistic society dominated by an aristocracy of kings, priests, and merchants. Its religious structure followed these divisions in granting access to the esoteric (Vajrayānic) domain of ritual and initiation.

At the top of the Newar Buddhist society were the Vajrācārya, Sākya, and Urāy castes. Comprising about ten percent of the Newar population, these were the only groups eligible for initiations (Nikhan, Dekka) and access to certain cults (kumārī pūjā, certain śrāddha pūjās, and cults to the fierce Vajrayāna deities). The entire edifice of Buddhist initiation was controlled by the Vajracaryas who through their advanced initiations (pañca abhiṣekha) claimed superior status and become eligible for performing rituals (Locke 1980: 47). The Vajrācāryas were (and are) married householders but assert that they are a legitimate sangha based upon Vajrayāna doctrine.

The Vajrācāryas' authority was also classically rooted in sādhana, meditative practices through which they gain spiritual

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<sup>1</sup>Hodgson in the nineteenth century indicated that he thought that most Newars were Buddhist (Chattopadhyay 1923: 522). More recently, Rosser determined that most Jyāpus in Sankhu employed Vajrācāryas until 1930 (Rosser (1966). Ishii also found Vajrācārya dominance in the southwest of the Valley in 1969 (Ishii 1978).

<sup>2</sup>The practice of modern Shresthas calling Vajrācāryas for death rituals (especially Chasu) likely indicates the former Buddhist dominance in this realm.

insight and the power. An individual Vajrācārya gained respect according to the extent his spiritual power and his mastery over ritual performance. The latter was publically recognized when the Vajrācārya retired to secluded caves and riverside tīrthas for solitary meditation retreats called puruṣan cwanegu. Focusing on his patron deity, the Newar gurujus would cultivate insight (prajñā) and extranormal powers (siddhi), faculties later used in teaching and performing rituals for their jajmāns. (Celebrated stories of Vajrācāryas returning from puruṣan cwanegu and performing miraculous feats are still part of the popular lore in Asan.) Through the lineage of initiation and sādhana, the Vajrācāryas claimed that they were legitimate Buddhist practitioners capable of mediating the presence of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and other deities within them and utilizing this capacity, as the guru maṇḍala pūjā vow states, for Bodhisattva-like service for others. By demonstrating the tradition's vitality in two areas-- embodying virtues and demonstrating power --these masters were exemplary figures who maintained the legitimacy of the Vajrayāna tradition.

The nature of Vajrācārya practice leads to a central issue in analyzing the Bahā Buddhist tradition: can Buddhist tradition be legitimate if transmitted outside of a celibate monastic setting? We stated in Chapter I that the decline of Newar monasticism was likely a slow dying off that began in the early Malla period. Although we cannot date this yet with certainty, it is clear that by later Malla times the Valley's celibate monastic system had fallen into decline.

However, by this time Vajrācārya householders had already

the mu bahā organization to define and organize themselves, confer initiations, and maintain their cults.<sup>1</sup> The bahā sanctums likewise remained places for meditative retreat, especially during Gunla, and as libraries for the textual tradition.<sup>2</sup>

Within the Vajrācārya community itself, there was an internal hierarchy with recognized specialists in Sanskrit learning, ritual performance, and meditation. Younger Vajrācāryas desiring to study in one of these fields could go to study with a chosen teacher. Thus, the different domains of ritual and spiritual mastery maintained by Bahā Buddhist tradition were transmitted by an internally stratified Vajrācārya community, a pattern similar to that found in the large monasteries of Tibet. By Malla times this organization of Newar Buddhism around bahā sanghas had fully evolved in a way that structurally paralleled Buddhist monastic traditions elsewhere. Defined as a "community of initiated masters," the Newar sangha has maintained an institution that evidences both continuities and transformations with classical Indian prototypes. The most notable change is in the sangha's married, householder state; but this is fully consistent with Vajrayāna philosophy.

Perhaps it was the press of Brahmanical competition for patronage that led sangha to organize itself as a miniature "galactic

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<sup>1</sup>In Chapter IV, we described the typical daily pūjās done in the bahās by the Vajrācārya sangha. Although in some places the older rites are not fully done, in several such as Itum Bahā, the bahā rituals clearly reflect the practices of the Indian viḥāras: a long wooden stick is struck 108 times, a custom that once served to awaken the monks (Dutt 1962: 335).

<sup>2</sup>These remain today as valuable, unexplored repositories of ancient Buddhist textual traditions.

Plate 118: Itum Bahā Nitya Pūjā: Preserving Ancient Indian Vihāra Tradition



Plate 119: Pandit Badri —  
Guruju (rear) Supervising  
Another Vajracārya at a  
Complicated Pūjā

system" (Tambiah 1976) by which sangha members moved out from the 18 Mu Bahā into over eighty sakha bahās ("branch bahās"). Drawing on textual traditions that foretell wonderful destinies to vihāra donors, this institution became an attractive form of dāna for the very wealthy to build (or rebuild).<sup>1</sup> Malla kings built a considerable number of the branch bahās in and around Asan Tol, most of which cannot be dated before 1600 (Pruscha 1975, II: 15-30). That many bahās were built in the later Malla period supports this view of the bahās then being legitimate and active religious institutions is the fact. Related to this, the vigorous caste ideology that characterized Malla society very likely led the Vajrācāryas to close off their order to be a separate, collective, kin-defined group as it became impossible for anyone not born a Vajrācārya to assume the priestly role. Rights to bahā property were passed down through sons of the patrilineage.<sup>2</sup> Vajrācārya status by tantric initiation was maintained, but only if an individual was part of a mu bahā lineage. Thus, the bahās became strong religious centers for the Vajracarya caste, retaining most of the architectural and ritual qualities of the classical vihāra, but suited to Vajrācārya sangha's needs as Vajrayāna practitioners,

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<sup>1</sup>This was clearly not a unilateral process, since some sanghas still include Sākyas whereas some are exclusively Vajrācāryas. The key point is that the bahā came to be owned by lineages rather than an institution "freely floating" through time in Newar society.

<sup>2</sup>This tendency whereby one caste group in society comes to dominate a sangha lineage also occurred in Sri Lanka (Evers 1969).

pandits, pūjārīs and teachers.<sup>1</sup>

Despite its lack of a celibate monastic base, it is clear that the Newar Bahā Buddhist tradition has maintained an institutional order consistent with the doctrinal standards of later Indian Buddhism. In this manifestation of Vajrayāna Buddhism, there is no inherent reason to describe it as "decadent." Although Snellgrove, in an early statement thought otherwise<sup>2</sup>, a later reflection of his might better characterize the proper scholarly attitude toward this tradition:

Perhaps too much has been written about the degeneration of Buddhism without it's being realized that those who consciously introduced ...changes were usually attempting to devise a more effective representation of one essential idea. (1966)

This transformation in Nepal was clearly a successful one for at least several centuries, though its future survival seems especially problematic. Before passing on to the exact nature of what the authoritative content of this tradition is, a further point on monasticism in the Kathmandu Valley is relevant.

It seems likely that throughout Malla times there was a Tibetan

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<sup>1</sup>In reaching this evolutionary situation, the state of Bahā Buddhism is similar to the tradition in Tibet and Japan where there are precedents for a married buddhist priesthood. Snellgrove's description of a Nyingma monastery suggests a situation similar to the Vajrācārya's bahā: "rNying-ma-pa establishments had always been small, consisting for the most part of a lama, often married, who was revered for special powers of meditation and the consecrations which he was able to give, so that he would be surrounded by a small group of practitisers" (Snellgrove and Richardson 1968: 196).

<sup>2</sup>"There is no true elite, none who have abandoned home for the homeless state and whose sole desire is the realization of the inner meaning of the doctrine...so we have only laymen and yogins in Nepal. ... The Newars are Buddhist in little more than name (1957: 112)."



monastic presence in the Kathmandu Valley. (The most notable was the Kargyupa monastery at Svayambhū which controlled this key shrine up until Rana times (Rose 1977). It is likely that there were mutual inter-relations between the Vajrācāryas and these lamas, and that Newars who desired to enter a celibate monastic career could be ordained in local Tibetan monasteries. In fact, this practice continues up to recent times, especially among the Urāy Lhasa traders, a considerable number of whom took ordinations into the Tibetan orders.<sup>1</sup> In Malla times as now, the Buddhist religious field extended beyond the indigenous Newar community.

#### The Texts of Bahā Buddhism

Due to Nepal's role as an entrepôt in the transmission of Buddhist tradition to Tibet and likely because of the infusion of texts carried in by refugees from the destruction of Indian Buddhism, the Valley has preserved a vast corpus of textual traditions.

The great corpus of popular literature, the full representation of Mahāyāna sūtras, and the plethora of tantras indicate the rich heritage of Buddhist literature preserved by Newar Buddhism.<sup>2</sup> (We have summarized the known manuscripts in Figure VIII-1.) An extensive ritualism is likewise indicated by the large collection of ritual texts and dhāraṇī manuscripts. Most striking is the apparent lack of

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<sup>1</sup>In the last fifty years, the Theravadins have also established monasteries which have attracted some Urāy who have taken ordinations. See the following chapter for a fuller treatment of both the Tibetan and Theravadin movements.

<sup>2</sup>The western understanding of "Northern Buddhism" and its Sanskrit sūtras really began with the manuscripts sent out of Nepal by Hodgson and others.

Figure VIII-1: Texts of the Newar Buddhist Tradition

| <u>Avadana</u>                | <u>Sutras</u>         | <u>Tantras</u>      |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| <u>Nava Dharma:</u>           |                       |                     |
| <-----1.Lalitavistara----->   |                       |                     |
| Buddhacarita                  | 2.Guhyasamaja         | Nispannayogavali    |
| Mahavastu                     | 3.Dasabhumi           | Sadhanamala         |
| Bodhisattva Avadana           | 4.Prajnaparamita      | Hevajra             |
| Asoka Avadana                 | 5.Samadhiraja         | Vajrasattva         |
| Avadana Sataka                | 6.Gandhavyuha         | Kala Cakra          |
| Bhadrakalpa Avadana           | 7.Saddharma Pundarika | Varahi              |
| Kavikumara Katha              | 8.Lankavatara         | Yogini              |
| Kapisa Avadana                | 9.Subvarnaprabhasa    | Buddha Kapala       |
| Lokesvara Sataka              | *****                 | KriyaSamgraha       |
| Manicuda Avadana              | Sukhavati Vyuha       | Guhya Siddhi        |
| Pindapatra Avadana            | Vajrasuchi            | Tara                |
| Ratnamala Avadana             | Karuna Pundharika     | Marichi             |
| Sugata Avadana                | Svayambhu Purana      | Yogambara           |
| Virakusa Avadana              | Panca Raksa           | Hayagriva           |
| Kathina Avadana               | Mahayana Sutralankara | Namasanghiti        |
| Suchandra Avadana             | Pratimoksha Sutra     | Samvara             |
| Upasada Avadana               | Bodhicaryavatara      | Yogapitha           |
| Divyavadanamala               | Siksa Samucchaya      | Trilokyavijaya      |
| Sumagadha Avadana             | Commentaries          | MahaKala            |
| Sringabheri                   | Abhidharmakosa        | [Hodgson lists      |
| Jatakamala                    | PrajanParamita        | 20 other titles]    |
|                               | Tika                  | ***                 |
|                               | Madhyamaka Vritti     |                     |
| <u>Dharani-Mantra Texts</u>   |                       |                     |
| Dharani                       |                       | <u>Ritual Texts</u> |
| NemasutraParijika             |                       | KriyaSamgraha       |
| Dharanimantra Samgraha        |                       | Pinda Vidhane       |
| Durgatiparisoddhana           |                       | Upasada Avadana     |
| Ganapati Hrdaya               |                       | Vasundhara          |
| Grahamatrka Dharani           |                       | Vratoppatti         |
| Mahasitavati                  |                       | Vratavadana         |
| Maharaksamantranusarini       |                       | ManjusriParajika    |
| Mahamayuri                    |                       |                     |
| Maricinama Dharani            |                       |                     |
| Ushnisavijaya Dharani         |                       |                     |
| Vajravidavana Nama Dharani    |                       |                     |
| Hrdayaupahrdaya               |                       |                     |
| Dhvajagrakeyuri Dharani       |                       |                     |
| Tarasta Uttarasatanama Stotra |                       |                     |
| Parnasavarinama Dharani       |                       |                     |
| Mahasahasrapramardini         |                       |                     |

indigenous commentaries, but before concluding that Newars were lacking in philosophically inclined pandits, we should note their practice of adding comments in the margins of Sanskrit manuscripts and the unlikelihood of Vajrācāryas giving tantric commentaries to non-initiates (like Hodgson or modern scholars).<sup>1</sup> The paucity of commentaries may also be due to the fact that initiations bind Newars to secrecy and that commentary in the tantric tradition is often the guru's verbal description which reveals the meaning of the written tantra (Wayman 1973: 62).

The Newars designate their key texts as the Nava Grantha or Nava Dharma. Although we found that few Tuladhars even knew of this group, they appear to be the central texts in Bahā Buddhism. This is shown by their mention in the guru maṇḍala pūjā and the practice of bahā sanghas continuously reading these texts during Guṇlā. Although only one fragment of the Vinaya has been recorded (Hodgson 1972 ed.: 37), the Nava Grantha represent the diverse schools and emphases of later Indian Buddhism: the life of Shākyamuni Buddha (Lalitavistara), Madhyamika (PrajñāPāramitā, Samādhirājā, SuvarṇaPrabhāṣa) and Yogacara philosophy (Lankāvatāra, Gaṇḍavyūha), and Bodhisattva practice (Daśabhūmi, Saddharmapundarikā). The inclusion of the Guhyasamāja as the only tantra among the Nava Grantha reflects the position of the Vajrayāna as the advanced standard of understanding and practice in Bahā Buddhism.

It is difficult to assess the meaning of the Nava Dharma grouping

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<sup>1</sup>In fact, in recent times Newars have written their own private commentaries to supplement initiation teachings and that modern pandits have in fact composed hundreds of small commentaries in the printed form.

other than to suspect that these texts were specially emphasized by the Vajrācāryas. Of all these, only the Lalitaviṣṭara has been published in Newari as it enjoys modern popularity in public story-telling. It is clear that the iconographical system centered on the Vajradhatumaṇḍala with Vajrasattva/Vairocana as the central celestial Buddha, represented in the Guhyasamaja Tantra and the Nispannayogavali, has been authoritative in Newar iconography (van Kooji 1977: 44). As Vajrasattva is the patron Buddha of the Vajrācāryas, these are the texts basic to their ritual service and meditations. The Adi Buddha ("Primordial Buddha" (Wayman 1973: 53) ) theory that is so influential in Bahā Buddhism is also described in the Guhyasamaja text.

For their ritual service, modern pūjā manuals cite several of the texts listed in Figure VIII-1, with the Kriyāsamgraha and the Mañjuśrīparajikā being the most commonly mentioned. The former outlines the proper procedures for most rituals which the Vajrācāryas perform.<sup>1</sup>

Special note should be made of two other texts that have importance in Newar practice: the Nāmasaṅgīti and the Svayambhū Purāna. The former, which formed part of the Mayajal Tantra (Vajrācārya (nd: gh), is a compendium of Vajrayāna teachings. Its presence in the Newar tradition is ancient as records show that it was studied by Dharmaśvamin at Than Bahā (just north of Kathmandu City) in the thirteenth century (Bajrācārya 1980: 63). Among the Newars, the Nāmsaṅgīti remains a popularly chanted stotra in a short dhāranī form;

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<sup>1</sup>Most contemporary Vajrācāryas have their own hand-copied texts for the major rituals they perform.



Plate 120: Shristikantha Avalokitesvara: Hindu Deities as Emanations of the Celestial Bodhisattva

and there is a popularly worshipped image of Nāmasangīti in Jana Bahā.

The Svayambhū Purāna is clearly an indigenous text that explains the Valley's religious origins based upon Adi-Buddha theory. Drawing perhaps on Khotanese tradition (Brough 1948), this text also describes the origins of the Svayambhū Chaitya, Vajrayāna tradition in Nepal, and the religious geography in the Kathmandu Valley. Over half of the most popular themes in the cultural media of Newar Buddhism, discussed below, have been inserted in this text. Thus, the Svayambhū Purāna should be considered the central popular text in the Baha Buddhist tradition.

#### The Culture of Popular Newar Mahāyānism

Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley has been characterized by an unbroken continuum of popular worship centered on the cult of Avalokiteśvara, the celestial Bodhisattva. Evidence of this cult in the early post-Licchavi period is most persuasive (Riccardi 1979: 273; Locke 1973: 64). The popular devotion to Karuṇāmaya-Avalokiteśvara was (and survives today as) the main characteristic of public Newar Buddhism. Another indicator of this deity's following is that the largest festivals in the Kathmandu Valley are Avalokiteśvara ratha processions. Finally, popular oral traditions are dominated by tales of Avalokiteśvara in various forms just as images of the Bodhisattva dominate Asan's shrines and private homes.

There is considerable evidence that the Amitābha cult was especially popular in the Valley.<sup>1</sup> As we have noted, the

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<sup>1</sup>Snellgrove's early survey (1957: 61) is wrong where he notes the absence of the Amitābha cult.



-Plate 121: Amitābha  
Buddha on a Directional  
Buddha Chaitya

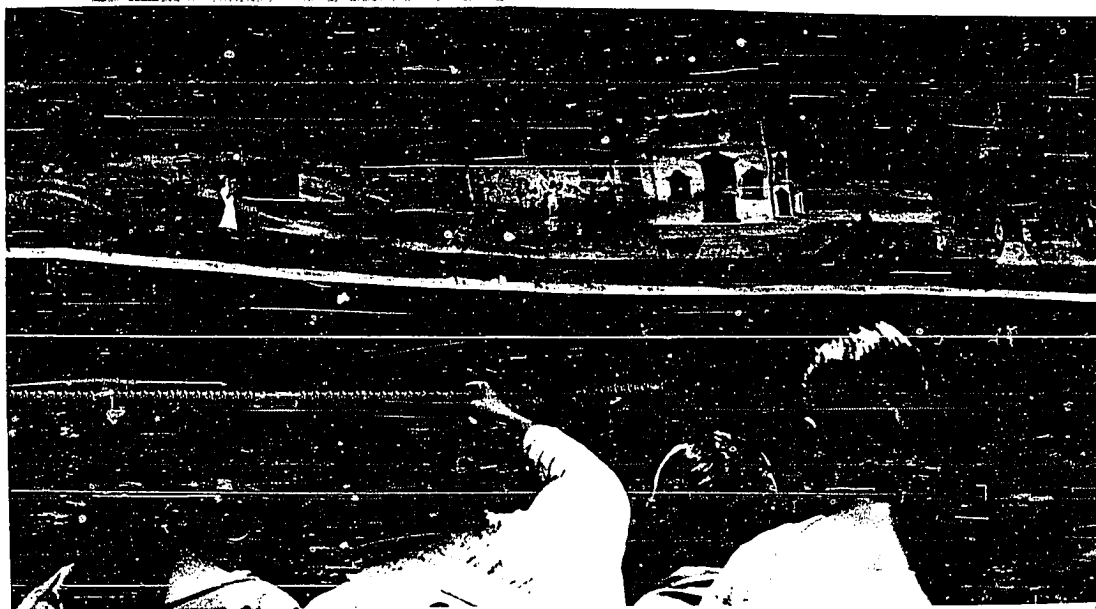


Plate 122: Women Looking at a Displayed Painted Scroll of the  
Singhasatabahu Avadāna

Sukhāvatīvyuha and Saddharmapundarīka, the classical sūtras describing Amitābha devotionalism, are both part of the Newar textual tradition. Moreover, the western shrines of major stupas are always the focus of offerings at all chaityas, from Svayambhū to the smallest courtyard shrine. Finally, we have noted the customs and rituals at death which invoke Amitabha and refer to his paradise, Sukhāvatī.

The lay level of tradition is very similar to that found throughout the Buddhist world. Devotions are oriented to the worship of stupas, both in the neighborhood and especially at the great Svayambhū stupa. Textually, the jātakas and avadāna stories centered on Buddhas and Bodhisattvas dominate the layman's awareness. Punya making and worldly well-being are the predominant concerns of laymen. Newars live in a highly ritualized world, among specialists possessing many types of ritual expertise. When needing protection or divine assistance for securing worldly betterment, approaching the deities with professional assistance is regarded as a great advantage.

The attainment of Nirvāṇa is taken seriously by only a very few. A small number hope for rebirth in a paradise (such as Amitābha's Sukhāvatī), but most individuals are unsure about even hoping for anything better than a good human rebirth and avoiding narak ("hell"). In these tendencies, the Urāy laymen are similar to lay Buddhists elsewhere (Gombrich 1971 ; Tambiah 1970). This fact supports our contention that Newar Buddhism evidences many normative continuities with other Buddhist societies.





Plate 123: A Modern Painting of the Manicuda Jātaka



Plate 124: Mahāsattva Raj Kumar Jātaka Scene

### Popular Cultural Media of Bahā Buddhism

When surveying the popular expressions of Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley, we noted recurring themes in architecture, art, song, and folklore which are derived from the major texts of Baha Buddhism. To use Singer's terminology, these constitute the "cultural media" of the tradition. Although textually derived, these media are popularly maintained and expressed in other forms which are continually reasserted and recreated by artists, singers, and storytellers. The cultural media of Newar Buddhism teach about deities, saints, and doctrine and define, in large part, the collective consciousness of the Buddhist layman. For lower caste Newars and for the Urāy who do not take the Dekka initiation, these media provide the content of their Buddhist world view and doctrinal awareness. Based upon our surveys at the major Buddhist shrines (Svayambhū, Jana Bahā), in the popular literature, and in Urāy homes, we outline the specific cultural media of popular Bahā Buddhism under four categories, reserving a more in-depth accounting of each for Appendix E.

Important Symbols. The directional orientation of the Five Buddhas is found on most chaityas and above Buddhist home entranceways. The aṣṭamangala ("eight auspicious ones") and the Sri Devi yantra are commonly seen symbols in religious settings. Finally, in our discussion of the religious geography, we noted that house, town, and valley have been arranged according to a four directional maṇḍala orientation.

Jātaka/Avadāna Media. Several accounts from these texts have a central place in Bahā Buddhism. The Manicuda, Mahāsattva Rāj Kumar,

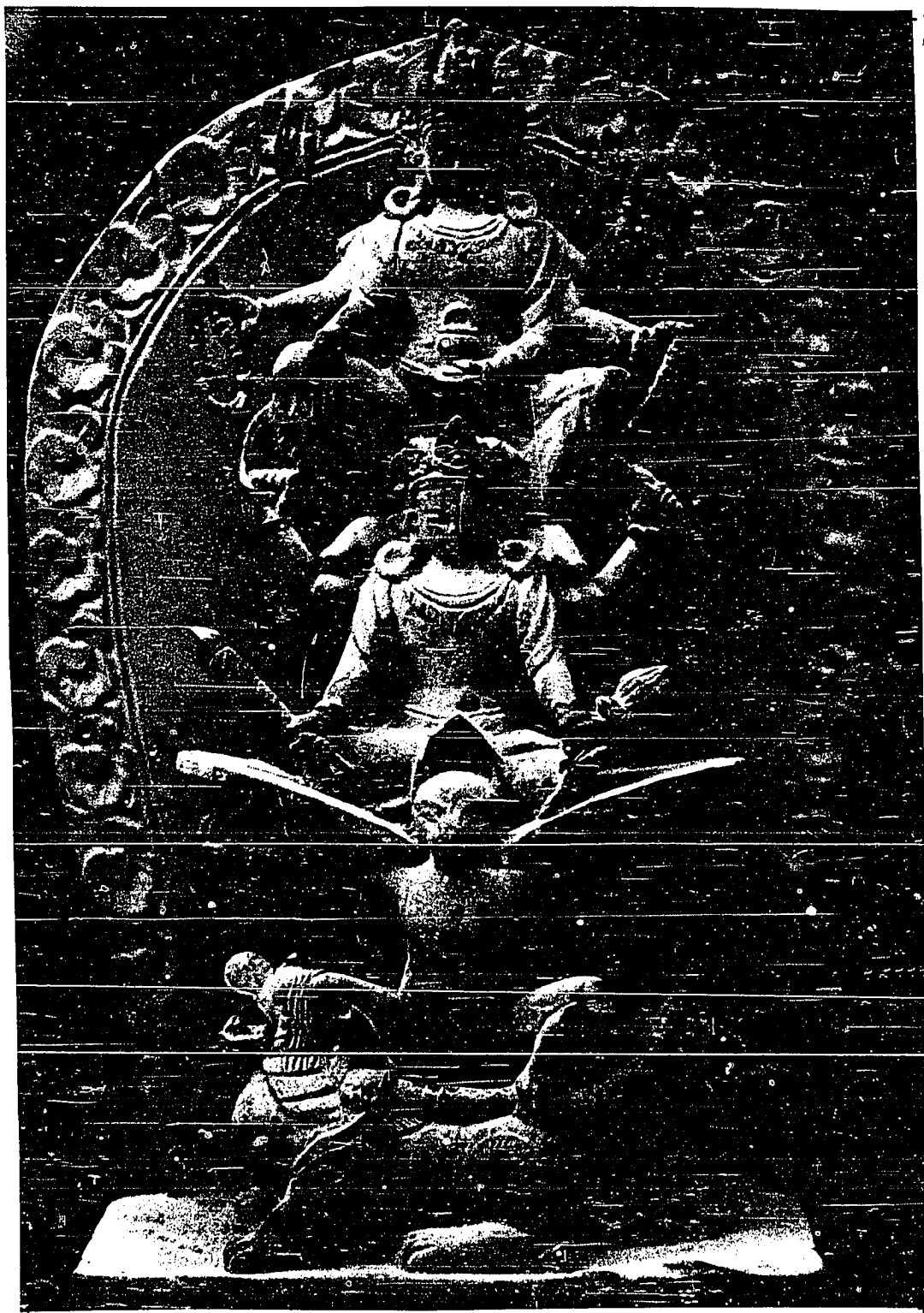


Plate 125: HariHariHariVahana Avalokitesvara: The Bodhisattva Astride Vishnu, with Garuda, Naga, and a Lion below

ViraKus, and Vessantara Jātaka tales are well known, with the former two identified with Valley's sacred geography. Each of these are widely depicted in popular art publications and are the subject of songs in the Dhāpa Bājan as well as more recently composed songs of the Jñānamālā Bhajan. The tale of Singhasatabahu, the trader who is rescued from demonesses by Avalokiteśvara, is also identified with the Kathmandu Valley's environs in the the Cakan Dya festival, as we have seen.

Another common textually derived theme is the "Buddha's return to Lumbini." In art and in song, the return of the Buddha to his birthplace, attended by subservient Hindu deities, is described.

Themes from the Svayambhū Purāṇa. The origin of the Valley wrought by Mañjuśrī, the conquest of the nāgas, the tale of Hariharivāhana Lokeśvara who secures Garuda's and Vishnu's worshipful submission, and the account of Shristikaṇṭha Lokeśvara's creation of the world that subordinates the Hindu deities to the celestial Bodhisattva are all derived from this text. Popular art and song describe each of these deities. The myth of the Buddha's conversion of the smallpox goddess Hāratī Ajimā also invokes the same theme of Buddhist dominance of the local pantheon (Bloss 1973: 44).

Local Heroes. Local heroes are a fourth category of media that is predominantly oral. Surat Vajrācārya, the priest who bested Tibetan lamas with his spiritual powers, is most well known. Another heroic figure is Keschandra, the merchant who goes from rags to riches due to a deity's favor. Tales of local demons who were defeated are also



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 Plate 126: A Painting of Sujata's Offering of Khir to Śakyamuni Hangs  
 Above the Dagu Bahā Courtyard Where Newar Women Make Offerings  
 +

popularly recounted: Gurumappa<sup>1</sup>, the cannibal, and Ganthakarna, the giant, are also the chief figures in the local festivals.

There are two major themes in these cultural media. First, almost all of the textual figures have some connection with the religious geography of the Kathmandu Valley. These media thus serve as models for devotional action and pilgrimage. Second, the dominant theme in the Buddhist media is the elevation of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and saints above all other deities, a theme we return to later in this chapter.

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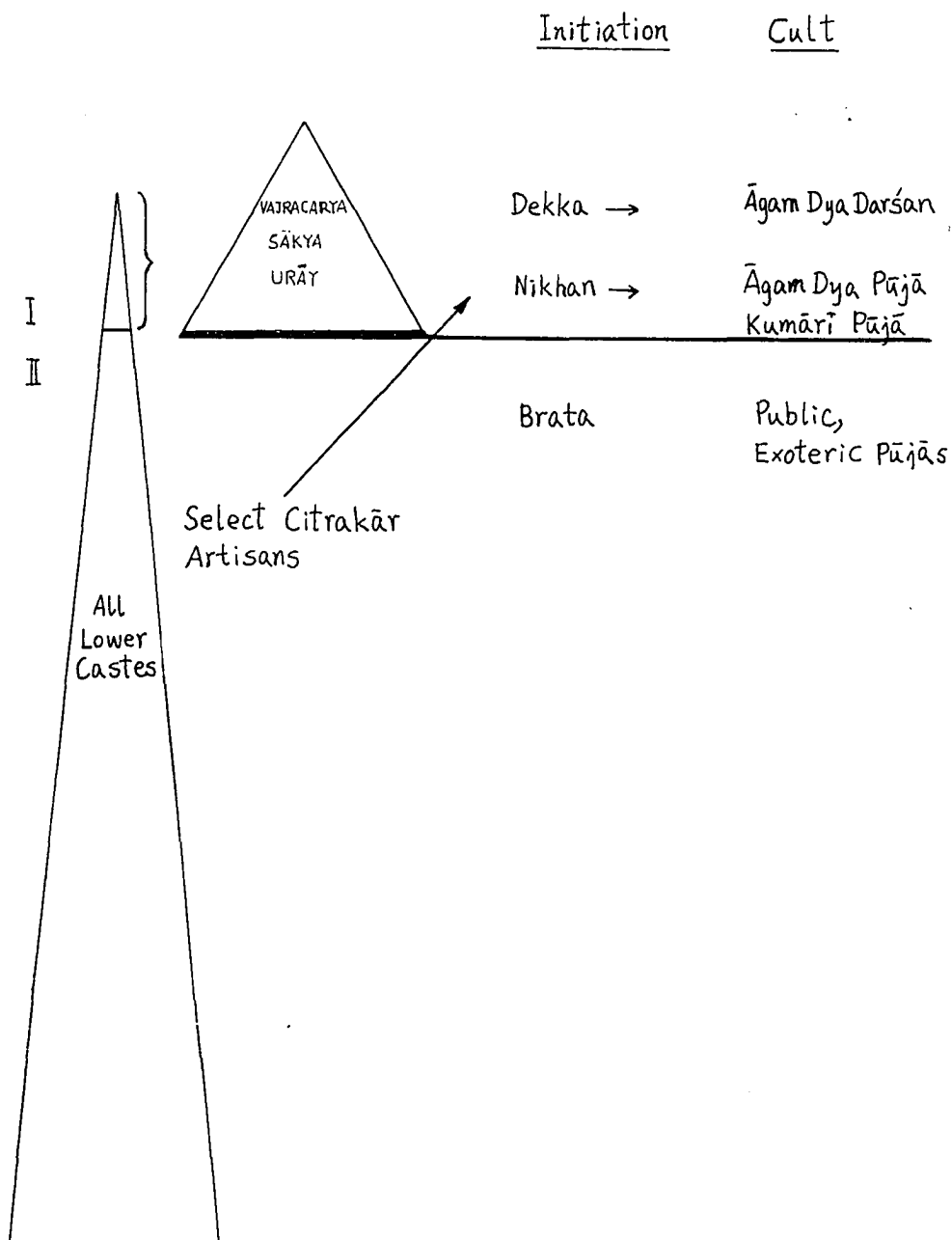
Thus, the Bahā Buddhist tradition is composed of two tiers of religious organization as shown in Figure VIII-2. As defined by caste status, there is the Vajrayāna domain accessible to ten per cent of the population and the realm of popular Mahāyāna practice. Among laymen, only the Urāy can pass to the second tier through initiation. By its maintaining the tantric cults and initiations for the "upper" tier and as disseminators of the media and maintainers of the ritual - festival traditions of popular Mahāyānism, the Vajrācārya sangha holds the Bahā Buddhist together.

Finally, we can now specify the overall structure of the tradition. The formula for evaluating the authoritative organization of Buddhist tradition was the claim of spiritual lineage that represents the TriRatna ("Three Jewels"): the Buddha, the Dharma, and Sangha. In Newar Bahā Buddhism, the Buddha is not understood as only

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<sup>1</sup>The first Newari comic book (in the Hindi style) was done with the story of Gurumappa.

Figure VIII-2: The Two Tiered Organization of Bahā Buddhism



Sākyamuni Buddha but as "Buddhahood" symbolized by the Ādi-Buddha which is manifested in a succession of historical Buddhas. The Svayambhū Purāṇa and other popular texts (Wilson (1828: 468) describe the Buddhas of previous epoches and honors Shākyamuni as the most recent arrival in the Kathmandu Valley. The Vajrācāryas maintain the designation Sangha for their community of initiates, basing their legitimacy on Vajrayāna doctrine. The Dharma (here, "teachings") is the Nava Dharma, popular hagiographic accounts, Mahāyāna texts, and the teachings transmitted through Vajrayāna initiations. Based upon these authoritative foundations, the Vajrācāryas were leaders of the lay Buddhist community in maintaining a distinctly Buddhist lifestyle in contrast to the Brahmanical culture around them.

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Our final task in this section is to discuss how the Baha Buddhist tradition was maintained materially. To do so, we must now assess the relationships between Vajrācāryas and laymen.

#### Basic Exchanges in the Newar Bahā Buddhist Tradition

In the elite-dominated society in which the Bahā Buddhist tradition flourished, the Vajrācāryas were supported materially in a number of ways. The foundation of support was the land endowments of the bahās. As did all landlords in the Valley, the bahā sangha claimed half of the produce of the lands and labor as rent from tenants. Certain sanghas also had the responsibility of performing the regular rituals at major temples in Kathmandu for which other guṭhi/land-tenure relationships existed. Finally, the Kathmandu sangha



of Vajrācāryas regulated the allotment of private jajmāns among Vajrācārya families so that many Vajrācārya families could earn their subsistence reliably from ritual service. The Vajrācāryas were the purohīts for a great majority of the merchants and agriculturalists in Kathmandu so that at its most highly developed form, the Vajrācāryas dominated the private ritual life of the Kathmandu Newars. This rôle and the importance of the income accrued through ritual service also helps to explain the vast elaboration of ritualism in the tradition.

Thus, lay-Vajrācārya exchanges were essential to maintaining the latter's standing. Although the agriculturalists constituted the vast majority of the population, their resources for sponsoring rituals were minimal. The Vajrācāryas therefore derived most of their patronage from the wealthier merchants and aristocracy. In addition to the dakṣiṇā paid for saṃskāra rituals and other pūjās, we have noted other occasions for Urāy-Vajrācārya exchange in the older tradition: for reading family texts and at the yearly Pañca Dān during Guṇlā; bestowing protective textual blessings at bahās and temples; and as part of the year-long mourning period. Furthermore, if a layman sponsored an extraordinary patronage festival, Samyak or Pañca Dān, feeding thousands of Vajrācāryas was the chief duty. Thus, the Bahā Buddhist tradition is skewed to be especially dependent on the dāna of the richest strata of Valley society.

These traditions clearly indicate the historical continuity of householder Vajrācāryas being regarded as a classical "field of merit" and worthy of dāna gifts from householders. This claim and the Urāy recognition of it still persists in modern Kathmandu.

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BAHĀ BUDDHISM AND HINDU-BUDDHIST RELATIONS

The Hindu dominance of the political center of Newar culture is a decisive factor that influenced the entire Bahā Buddhist cultural system. The Malla kings instituted policies according to the Hindu Dharmaśāstras which, on the one hand, led them to patronize all religious practitioners in the kingdom, including the Buddhists, but also molded a social order based upon pollution and purity regulations. Most of the paradigmatic gestures of lifestyle, festivals, and patronage reflected the ideology of caste practice and the Brahman caste's attitude to these categories. This influence accentuated caste identity as an organizing principle in society and enforced norms of ritual and interpersonal conduct that affected everyone in the society, including the Buddhist communities.

In this context, both Vajrācāryas and lay Buddhists likely felt the need to emphasize --and likely develop-- Buddhist rituals which conformed outwardly to the Hindu saṃskāras. Although this led to the creation of mere external similarity that left the deities and gestures of Vajrayāna Buddhism still intact, Vajrācārya rituals still achieved the same goals that Hindu rituals advanced: purifying the jajmān, empowering him, and pacifying any deities that might interfere with the rites of passage. In Bahā Buddhism we find classical Vajrayāna ritual language and pantheon used to demarcate saṃskāras, as we noted in previous chapters.

As an endogamous group of Sanskrit pandits, astrologers, healers, and hierophants, the Vajrācāryas seem to occupy the same societal niche as the Brahman caste. In fact, some scholars have argued that

the Vajrācāryas have become "Buddhist Brahmins" (Greenwold 1974), the first topic we must explore under Hindu-Buddhist relations.

### Caste and Newar Buddhism

The issue of Buddhism and caste is one of the oldest controversies in the western study of ancient Indian culture. As early scholars have shown, one can derive contradictory conclusions as to whether or not the Buddha was against the caste system of his time. If we turn to the popular avadāna literature that has instructed lay Buddhists, including the Newars, for centuries, the message is conveyed repeatedly that wealth and high caste status are rewards for punya and these birth circumstances are then often the foundation for special spiritual accomplishment (Thomas 1933: 89). In this literature, the Bodhisattva is very frequently a Brahman or a Ksatriya.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, the Tuladhars do not feel that being Buddhist and using caste categories in their social relations are inconsistent.

Both Hindu and Buddhist Newars share a broad consensus on the structural principles of caste behavior, with ranking based on the purity of birth. For a Buddhist society based upon Vajrayāna ideology, be it Tibetan or Newar, the secrecy of initiation creates a system that is necessarily elitist (Stablein 1977). Newar Buddhists defined the elite which could gain access to ritual services and meditation

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<sup>1</sup>For example, the Vicitrakāṭṭhikavadānoddhṛtā, a Newar avadāna text translated by Jorgensen (1931), abounds with just such cases.

according to caste criteria.<sup>1</sup>

Vajrācārya rituals confer a regular infusion of purification (via prasād) for priest and patron. The Vajrācārya gurus control who may have the different pūjās performed, a fact often mentioned in the ritual manuals. Thus, the lower a group's caste ranking, the fewer rituals are open to it. (The same rules limit the practice of Nikhan and Dekka, to the upper caste groups only, as we have seen.) Where Bahā Buddhism differs from other known Buddhist societies in history is in the use of their system's using caste status to delimit praxis and restrict the dissemination of the Dharma. Thus, the social forces that ended Newar celibate monasticism culminated in a type of Buddhist organization dominated by Vajrācāryas who justified their status in terms of ritual purity. They not only restricted their initiations to those who could afford to pay for them, but they also limited the number of individuals eligible for initiation, something the Tibetan masters never did.<sup>2</sup> Initiations into the Vajrayāna meditations came to command a high price, even for eligible upper caste men and women.

Using caste as the sole basis for judging a person's karma rationalizes the Vajrācāryas' preeminence in society and allows them to control the transmission of tradition so that they can maximize

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<sup>1</sup>One old Vajrācārya once said to me that in his view the lower castes could not be trusted with the Vajrayāna secrets because they would use them for ill. If we assume -- as we must -- that the Newars believed in the power of their Vajrayāna rituals, then excluding the lower castes from access to this level of practice must be seen as another means of "keeping them in their place" and preserving the elite-dominated social order.

<sup>2</sup>As we discuss in Chapter XI, in the post-Rana period this upper caste exclusivism has made it impossible for the Vajrācāryas to attract the patronage of the new classes who are not in the former elite castes, especially among the nouveau riche Jyāpus. For this and other reasons, they have turned to Newar Brahmins (Rosser 1966).

their economic standing. As pandits, ritual masters, and repositories of the Buddhist teachings, the Vajrācāryas' role in Bahā Buddhism evolved to insure their survival in the same structural manner as the Brahman in Newar Hindu society. A different doctrinal foundation and ritual order has not prevented them from settling into this position.

By upholding caste divisions, the Newar Vajrayāna has lost the missionizing dimension of Buddhist tradition that insists that the Dharma is for all beings. By recognizing caste divisions as the basis for restricting spiritual advance and supporting the Indian system of pollution and purity practice, the tradition lost the ideological power to distinguish itself from the Brahmanical system alongside of which it grew historically. Finally, by eliminating the possibility of admitting non-Vajrācāryas, the Vajrācārya sangha ceased to be a refuge in Newar society for spiritually inclined individuals. By restricting the pool of eligible practitioners to roughly five per cent of Newar society, Bahā Buddhism could not draw into its sangha these non-Vajrācāryas who could have been a source of vitality. This represents a significant transformation of the classical notion of sangha. Perhaps in examining the evolutionary path followed by the Vajrācāryas in Newar society, we can discern one of the trends that weakened Buddhism in India a millenium earlier.

### Hindu-Buddhist Relations

Newar civilization has always been composed of Indian (Hindu, Buddhist) and local cultural elements.<sup>1</sup> Because each has strong roots in a common cultural heritage, all Newars share a very broad consensus of fundamental religious notions. Both Hindus and Buddhists follow a common repertoire of ritual when worshipping the deities and observing festivals. Furthermore, both mark life cycle passages with rituals and share the catur āśrama notion of "seasons" in the religious life.<sup>2</sup> Both believe in deities and rely on ritual specialists. Their ethical orientations are based upon non-violence and the ethos of making punya through offerings to deities and dāna to religious men. Finally, both Newar Buddhism and Hinduism have been strongly influenced by tantra. These are pervasive continuities and reflect, in part, a common Newar heritage of Indian culture and history. This is not to ignore the fact that Buddhism began and perpetuated itself as an alternative religious system in India: both the continuities and contrasts with Hindu traditions (in philosophy, mythology, iconography, ideology, etc. ) are important to understanding its history in the subcontinent.

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<sup>1</sup>As analytical terms for religious traditions in society, both "Hinduism" and "Buddhism" are insufficient terms: the former is a broad cover term for a cultural environment dominated by Brahmans and which includes sādhus, mediums, and devotees whose chief orientation is to the the Sanskritic divinities Śiva, Vishnu, and Devi. "Buddhism" may be defined as a religious system centered on the Tri Ratna: devotion to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas; a Sangha community of bhikṣus and ācāryas; and a doctrinal system that leads men to liberation and which subordinates all other religious practice to this standard.

<sup>2</sup>Simply stated, this is the Indian notion that as one gets older, he or she should become more inclined to practice religious rituals and meditations.

After noting these continuities, it would still be incorrect to conclude that the distinction between Newar Buddhism and Hinduism is meaningless or that Newar religion is a "syncretism" of both, an assertion made by many writers (Lienhard 1978). The culture of Northeast India may have absorbed Buddhism, but Buddhist tradition survived in Nepal, a fact indicating that Newar Buddhists worked at maintaining a meaningful distinction.

In speaking of Buddhism in society, we are dealing with traditions composed of diverse cultural components (i.e. texts, rituals, architectural conventions, initiations, etc.) held together loosely by a small group of masters in the sangha. This enterprise is maintained and transmitted through systems that integrate Buddhist tradition (as belief, practice, and physical presence) into a polity that materially supports it. Thus, to speak of "Hindu-Buddhist relations", we must speak of complex and competing systems.

In the Newar context, the relationship between them is largely a struggle for patronage among the specialists -- Vajrācāryas versus Brahmans/Karmācāryas -- for institutional support, ritual service, cults, and for ideological dominance. We examine these aspects as they were at work in Asan Tol.

### Doctrinal Views

The differences between Hinduism and Buddhism are clearest when considering doctrine. Intellectual Newars of both groups still maintain the classical polemical viewpoints derived from ancient Indian tradition. To the Hindu Newars, the Buddha is an avatāra ("incarnation") of Vishnu and the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is

Macchendranath, a Vaisnava saint.<sup>1</sup> Buddhist Newars, in turn, assert that the Hindu deities are either Bodhisattvas or inferiors when compared to the Buddhas or Bodhisattvas. This polemical stance is very highly developed in Newar art and Tuladhar tradition. According to the Svayambhū Purana, the world first emerged from śūnyatā with the manifestation of the Adi Buddha<sup>2</sup> who appointed a Bodhisattva, Shristikantha Avalokitesvara, to arrange the cosmos and administer it. Shristikantha, in turn, created the Hindu deities and gave them specific world-maintaining responsibilities, a relationship depicted in Newar Buddhist art and shown in Plate VIII-120. In this system, the Buddhist texts make the claim that the universe has its origins in Buddhist hierophany that surmounts Hindu heavens with realms ruled over by celestial Bodhisattvas.

The claim of the Hindu deities being servants of the Buddha is made in another popular art motif, Sakyamuni's "Return to Lumbini." In this image (and as described in a popular song) the Buddha comes in procession with several bhiksus who are waited upon by Siva beating his drum, Vishnu blowing his conch, Brahma sweeping the road, etc. (Plate VIII-127).

The practice of identifying Hindu deities with Buddhist divinities is widespread and summarized in Figure VIII-3:

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<sup>1</sup>The texts in the Newar Hindu tradition that state this are the Buddha Purāṇa and the Nepal Mahātmya (Levi 1905: 373). Recall that the Vishnu temple in Asan Tol depicts the Buddha as one of the ten incarnations of Vishnu.

<sup>2</sup>The Newar recension of this system seems very close to Advaita Vedanta, with the Adi Buddha as Brahman whose essence is separated into the Panca Buddhas and historical Buddhas. Shakyamuni Buddha, for example, is "reabsorbed" into the Adi Buddha after his Parānirvana (Hodgson (1972 ed.: 46).



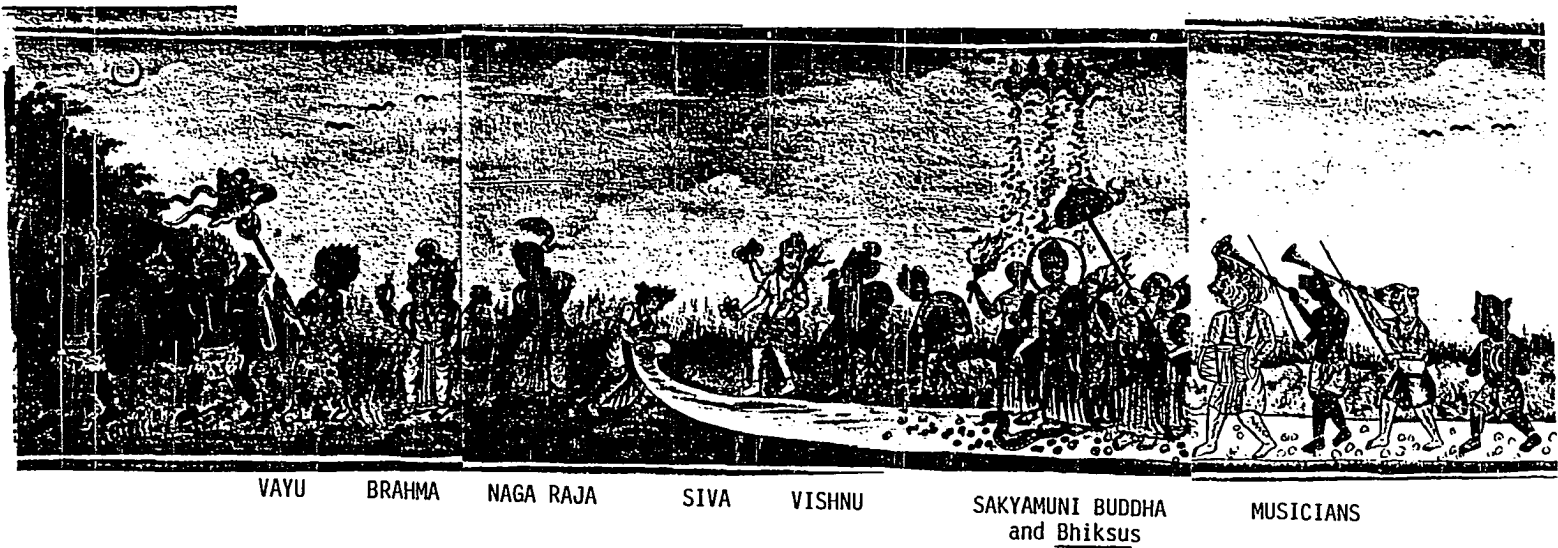


Plate 127: Sakyamuni Buddha at Lumbini: Hindu Deities Serve the  
Tathagata

Figure VIII-3: Buddhist Identifications of Hindu Deities

| <u>Hindu Deity</u> | <u>Buddhist Identity</u>    |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Laksmī             | Basundhāra                  |
| Buda Nilakantha    | Padmapani                   |
| Śiva-Paśupati      | Bameśvara Tathāgata         |
| Śitala Mājū        | Haratī Ajimā                |
| Śiva Linga         | Akshobhya Buddha            |
| Changu Nārāyana    | Avalokiteśvara              |
| Sūrya (Sun God)    | a celestial Bodhisattva     |
| Sarasvatī          | Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva's wife |

In addition, the Tuladhars relegate Siva to deeply subordinate identity in two different ways: as Nāṣa Dya, "Lord of Performance" and as Luku Mahādya, "Deity of the Luku ("Refuse Pit") ". Because the Buddhist myths insist that both of their shrines must be in dirty places, this must be taken as a polemical statement of hierarchy.

In temple architecture, these relationships are clearly expressed according to maṇḍala design and vertical hierarchy. Hindu gods are invoked to protect the Buddhist divinities at the maṇḍala center. Ganesh and Saraswati flank bahā entranceways and stupa finials above temple roofs. All are clear statements of Buddhist hierarchy.

Both systems also erect their own distinctive "Sacred canopies" over the lesser deities of the pantheon: dya such as Ganesh and Bhāirav are claimed by both as protectors. The nāgas are likewise regarded as servants of Vishnu and converts to Buddhism.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The classical "Sleeping Vishnu" is supported by a Nāga and the Buddha of the northern direction, Amogasiddhi has nāgas arranged over his directional niche.

### Contrasts in Ritualism

This competition can be obscured by the fact that both Hindu and Buddhist Newars worship at the same temples. For the Tuladhars, worshipping deities is fully consistent with textual teachings that enjoin laymen to do whatever is necessary to secure worldly happiness through rituals (Robinson 1966: 39). Thus, a Tuladhar worshipping Ganesh is not engaging in syncretism. In any case, this mutuality in temple worship does not extend much beyond the minor deities: few Tuladhars worship at Paśupati or Buda Nilkantha and fewer still Hindus worship at Svayambhū.

The yearly cycle of festivals reflects these patterns. As we saw in the last chapter, some are distinctly Buddhist which the Hindus ignore; some are distinctly Hindu, which the Buddhists ignore. Most festivals are jointly celebrated, though in many cases the two groups observe them differently.

Comparing the household cults of Tuladhars and Shresthas, we find strong contrasts. Ritual implements and deities are very different. Although the general order of life-cycle rites is the same, the rituals marking them are different. We have noted that the Buddhists have adopted the Brahmanical saṃskāras in ways not clearly related to textual teachings, a trend we identified as part of the process of the Vajrācāryas becoming "Buddhist Brāhmins." The year-long śrāddha pūjās were the most striking in this regard.<sup>1</sup> Both groups now

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<sup>1</sup>Jaini has made some interesting observations regarding the survival of Jainism in India in comparison to Buddhism. The Jains accepted the layman's worship of Hindu deities, but identified them, as did the Buddhists, as glorified householders. However, the Jains prohibited the worship of the sun, fire, trees, and rivers and did not allow śrāddha (Jaini 1982).

accentuate the differences marking their separate religious identities.

### Institutional Competition

The Hindu tradition works to place the Brahman caste at the center of state ritual and politics, with Hindu cults organized in a loosely ordered hierarchy ruled over by a Brahman-officiated cult to the great deity Śiva. In its system, the King is identified as an incarnation of Vishnu.

The Buddhist notion, in contrast, places the Sangha in the most exalted class of beings, close to secular power and above all other religious practitioners. The texts prescribe flexibility in adapting the tradition to local circumstances, but with a conscious policy of dominating all other religious institutions, including Hindu orders (Mus 1967: 99). The King may be a Bodhisattva or else a Cakravartin, "A Great Being Turning the Wheel (of Dharma)." Both cultural systems thus assert their domination of the pantheon by claiming dominance over the religious field represented in the religious geography of the Valley. We noted this already in the case of tīrthas. Temples should be regarded as revenue-attracting institutions for their attendants. Major shrines such as Pasupati and Svayambhū have huge landed endowments that accrue resources for the priestly elite who, in turn, utilize these to strengthen their tradition.

The differences between the two traditions are summarized on the following page in Figure VIII-4.

Figure VIII-4: Summary of Hindu-Buddhist Relations

| <u>Buddhist Tradition</u>                         |                                     | <u>Hindu Tradition</u>                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ādi Buddha                                        | <u>Cosmology</u>                    | Hindu Deities as Creators                                  |
| Presided over by Bodhisattva                      | <u>Pantheon</u>                     | Ruled by Great a Hindu Divinity                            |
| <u>Bahā</u>                                       | <u>Institution</u>                  | <u>Matha, asrama, temple</u>                               |
| Svayambhū                                         | <u>Major Center</u>                 | Paśupati                                                   |
| Vajrācāryas                                       | <u>Temple Ritualists</u>            | Karmācāryas and Brahmins                                   |
| Vajrācāryas                                       | <u>Jajmān Rituals</u>               | Karmācāryas and Brahmins                                   |
| Bodhisattva and Cakravartin                       | <u>Ideal King</u>                   | <u>Avatāra</u>                                             |
| <u>Pūjā</u><br>Vajrācārya charms<br>Deity worship | <u>Resort in Practical Religion</u> | <u>Pūjā</u><br>Brahman charms<br>Deity worship             |
| <u>Punya making, bhakti to Bodhisattva</u>        | <u>Lay Ethos</u>                    | <u>Punya making, bhakti to Krishna, Śiva, Vishnu, Devi</u> |
| Sukhāvati<br>↓<br>(Nirvāṇa)                       | <u>Heavenly Rebirth</u>             | Baikuntha                                                  |

Thus, the religious history of the Kathmandu Valley is largely the outcome of these polemical ideas, competing institutions, and ritual specialists that was played out in a struggle for the patronage of kings, traders, and society at large. Both Hindu tradition and Buddhist tradition have potent ideological arguments that have proven effective in transforming local cultures across Asia. The destiny of either tradition in Nepal was not a battle for new ideas, but in persuading the major figures in society that the already stated hierarchies still held true. The key question in Buddhist history

would seem to be: who becomes the monk or ācārya ? Do the spiritually gifted individuals in the community join the sangha or do they go elsewhere ?

Although the details of doctrine, ritual, and procedure constitute clearly contrasting systems, it is not clear that these religious differences have created fully separate socio-cultural systems. Culturally, laymen following both traditions share an orientation based upon the ethos of punya making and the concerns of "practical religion." Both regard heaven and hell as potential destinies. Only with regard to salvation and the supremacy of Buddhahood, topics of remote philosophical interest to the masses, is there a fundamental disagreement.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, it is difficult to see a major difference between the celestial Bodhisattva Karuṇāmaya and Vishnu: both grant the prayer requests and both are active in the world, causing the rains to fall, etc. . Finally, both Celestial Bodhisattva and Avatāra may intervene to lead devotees toward salvation.

For the masses in Nepal, then, the religious systems have become mirror images of one another and indistinguishable in many fundamental respects. Their many differences are relevant only to those few who have an interest in doctrine qua doctrine or the cultural specialists involved in maintaining the institutions. The question of dominance turns on the ability of one system or the other to serve as the channel for the basic lay religious needs: punya making, ritual

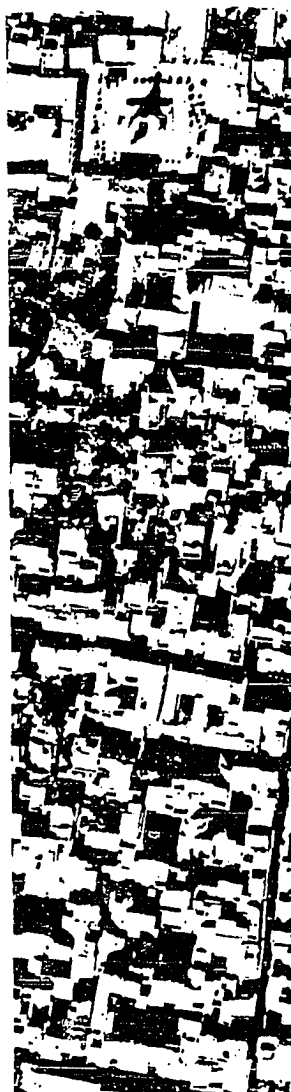
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<sup>1</sup>For the Urāy, among whom this awareness is considerable, these differences are mentioned, an issue we explore in the next chapter.

purification, and protection. The societal forces that shape the destiny of sangha and temple as well as the religious standing of Vajrācāryas and Brahmins determine which system is given the advantage in answering these needs. In a state that is ordered according to Brahmanical standards and bestows patronage accordingly, the struggle to maintain Buddhist dominance is a difficult task. The solution that evolved in Mahā Buddhism was to emulate the Brahmanical system by adopting the ideology of purity (Vajrācāryas as Buddhist Brahmins) and formulating analogous forms of ritual practice (in the samskāras). This solution succeeded until the patterns of patronage changed after Malla rule and other Buddhist movements entered the scene to question Vajrācārya practice. These are the issues we must consider in Part III of this study.

Part III:

Religious Change and Modern Consciousness  
in  
Asan Tol





## CHAPTER IX

Tibetan and Theravāda Traditions in the Kathmandu Valley and Their  
Impact on Bahā BuddhismHISTORY AND PRESENCE

In the previous chapter, we discussed the Vajrācāryas with particular emphasis on their role as teachers, ritual hierophants, and exemplars of Vajrayāna values at the center of the Bahā Buddhist tradition. In recent times, their role in the Buddhist life of the Newars has been affected by many inter-related factors such as the cultural ramifications of Rana rule, their fractured relations with the Urāy jajmāns, and the multi-faceted impact of modernization, (the subject of Chapter XI).

Another dimension of this situation is the competition of other Buddhist traditions in the Kathmandu Valley. In the increasingly pluralistic environment of modern Nepal, both the Tibetan lamas and Theravāda Buddhist bhikṣus have established themselves and their traditions as alternatives to the system of Buddhist belief and practice represented by the Vajrācāryas. We must complicate an already complex account of the Urāy Buddhist community by examining their role in these traditions. For as might be expected, the Tuladhars are key supporters of both groups.

Tibetan Buddhist Tradition in Nepal

In the small details of Tuladhar life, we see many ways in which Newar Buddhists have incorporated Tibetan culture into the mainstream of their own cultural life. On occasions when special hospitality is shown in their households, Urāy women often prepare buttered tea and momos ("small, dough-enclosed meats, cheeses, or sweets") just as they

frequently wear the bhaku style Tibetan dress. We noted already that in Tuladhar wedding festivities, it is prestigious for the groom's family to have one member of the party wearing Tibetan clothing when fetching the bride. Tuladhar pūjā kothās often have Tibetan tan̄kas or a picture of the Dalai lama on their walls. Finally, Urāys use khata:, distinctly Tibetan white offering scarves for rituals.

The period of contact between the Newar and Tibetan civilizations has been very long. Long distance travel in the Himālayas through Nepal must have been an ancient practice. Nomadic pastoralism, caravan trade, cultural missions, and the maintenance of political alliances necessitated extended periods of travel across the often hostile mountain environment. The Kathmandu Valley lies close to the edge of the Tibetan Plateau along routes leading to two of the easiest passes over the Himālayan mastif, at Kirong and Kodari. Just as the Valley throughout its history was an outpost of Indian culture from the south, it was also affected by migrations from the north along these routes. Newar culture was and still is a product of Indian culture as it evolved in a continual dialectical relationship with other Himālayan cultures.

The evidence for tracing the history of relationships with the north is meager. According to the Tibetan chronicles, the first Tibetan king, Srongsan Gampo, married a Nepalese princess, Brikuti. In these accounts, she is given credit for introducing Nepalese Buddhist art and architecture into Tibet as Newar artisans are said to have erected the Tsulang Khang, the first and central-most Buddhist temple in Lhasa. Regardless of the historicity of this event, it is clear that later Newar painters, architects, and sculptors influenced

the Tibetan acquisition of Buddhist tradition. The record in art history best exemplifies the role of Newars as chief middlemen in disseminating Indian culture centered on Buddhism into Tibet. As the Tibetologist Tucci points out, "Because of her prolonged relations with Tibet, Nepal was destined to leave a lasting imprint on Tibetan art...Nepalese artists dominated the development of Tibetan painting (1973: 87)."

By the fifteenth century, the reputation of the Newar artisans was so great that the Mongolian kings of China called upon Newar master Arniko and twenty-four assistants to Peking to build temples and make images for them.

Soon after Buddhism gained a significant following in Tibet, Tibetans themselves began making concerted efforts to go south to copy the sacred texts, study the doctrines, and take initiations from the great Indian teachers. Because the trek to the Indian plains was long and often deadly for the mountain-acclimatized Tibetans, the Kathmandu Valley's environs were preferred by many. Since the great Indian teachers did visit Nepal and since it is likely that Newar Buddhist teachers also had their own masters in residence (Malla 1981: 17-22), the Kathmandu Valley was a center for the transmission of Buddhism. As evidence of its renown, modern Tibetan traditions link the great Indian teachers Śāntaraksita and Padma Sambhava with the Valley and refers refers specifically to the Newar Vajrācāryas as the source of their initiation lineage for the deities Vajra Joginī and Mekha Samvara.

When Buddhism declined after the eleventh century in Kashmir and after the twelfth century in northeast India, Tibetan access to Indian

Buddhism was confined to the Newars. By this time, Tibet had experienced a massive infusion of Buddhist traditions and began its own unique synthesis of doctrine and practice. As trade relations and cultural contact continued between Nepal and Tibet, the pattern of influence became more reciprocal.

Tibetan Buddhist tradition shares the Newar understanding of the Kathmandu Valley as a sacred Buddhist environment. In the historical chronicles, the Valley is spoken of as a Buddhist country in which the stupas at Svayambhū and Bauddha are revered as the principal two among many sacred places. In the Tibetan guide books written for pilgrims visiting the Valley (Wyllie 1970; Dowman 1981), one finds accounts of the religious geography which record legends unknown to modern Newar tradition. This literature also gives a sense of the antiquity of Tibetan interest and involvement in the Valley qua sacred realm.

At Svayambhū, the Tibetan monasteries and chief lamas until recent times dominated the shrine maintenance and directed occasional restoration projects on the hilltop (Hodgson 1971 ed.: 21; Aris 1979). As we argued in the last chapter, Tibetan monasticism was likely part of the Kathmandu Valley's religious field, perhaps a strong part, throughout the Malla period.

The prestige of great Tibetan lamas in Kathmandu continued into this century. The most notable example is the lama Yangstay who visited Nepal around 1921, attracted massive Newar support, and who was later expelled by the ruling Ranas.<sup>1</sup>

Trade relations between Tibet and Nepal share the same ancient

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<sup>1</sup>It was the Urāy support for this lama precipitated the destructive 30 year dispute with the Vajrācāryas.

history. Kathmandu Newars were well situated to control the flow of goods going in both directions through the Valley, as taxes on trade were a major source of revenue for the Newar kings. One decisive component in the Shah conquest of the Newars was Prithivi Narayan's success at cutting off the flow of trade through Kathmandu, depriving the Malla kings of revenue and undermining the Newar traders' support of their own government (Regmi 1974). Gorkhali rule effected changes in Newar trading with Tibet but Newars did not lose their command over it. After 1856 the Ranas revoked many of the Tibetan privileges in the Valley, the most notable being the control of Svayambhū.

After the British Younghusband Expedition of 1903 opened up the superior and shorter trade route to Tibet through Kalimpong, Newar traders lost their predominant position in the trade northward, though many moved their operations eastward to carry on the businesses. They did retain their hold on minting the money of Tibet, a very lucrative business which dates back to as early as the mid-sixteenth century (Regmi 1974).

To trade effectively in Tibet, Newar families sent family members to the major cities--Lhasa, Shigatse, Gyantse--to live for years at a time. These men learned to speak Tibetan, took part in the cultural life centered on Buddhism, and frequently married Tibetan wives. Newars in Tibet were of several kinds: some extended successful family businesses from Kathmandu and prospered; others attached themselves as salesman servants to the dominant Newar trading houses, making little more than a modest wage ; still others went to start new businesses that often failed because they lacked the considerable capital and the web of personal contacts required. Newars in Tibet did cphere as a

group, creating guthis to celebrate their own festivals and organize themselves in dealing with Tibetan officials.

Newars living in Tibet were almost invariably affected by the deep sense of Buddhist devotion that dominated Tibetan life. Traders who are still living recall the great teaching lamas, report their firm conviction in the genuine spirituality of the Tibetan people, and feel a sense of devotion to the Dalai Lama. To a much greater degree than their kinsmen in Kathmandu, the Tuladhar Lhasa traders were exposed to a society permeated by the spirituality of Vajrayāna Buddhist tradition.

In many domains, Lhasa traders have had a strong effect on their own tradition when they returned to Kathmandu. First, the often great profits returned to contribute to Kathmandu's economy, primarily through religious patronage. We know that in this century Lhasa traders restored and made additions to Buddhist shrines throughout the Valley: the Directional Buddhas at Svayambhū, improvements to Śi Gha:, and the enlargement of the Bijesvārī complex, Jana Bahā, and the Annapurna temple in Asan were all from their purses. In addition, they sponsored the preponderance of extraordinary patronage events in this century: over ten Samyaks and fifteen Pañca Dāns.

Second, Lhasa traders have shaped Buddhist opinion in the Urāy community. In a society linked by extensive kin ties and a multitude of social networks, their Tibetan experience and higher sense of Buddhist belief and orthodoxy has been pervasively disseminated in Asan. We have already noted that Lhasa traders were in the forefront of the 30 year Urāy-Vajrācārya dispute: as the Vajrācāryas' practice has deteriorated, comparisons with the Tibetan lamas have become a

Plate 128: Tuladhar Woman Receiving a Lama's Blessing

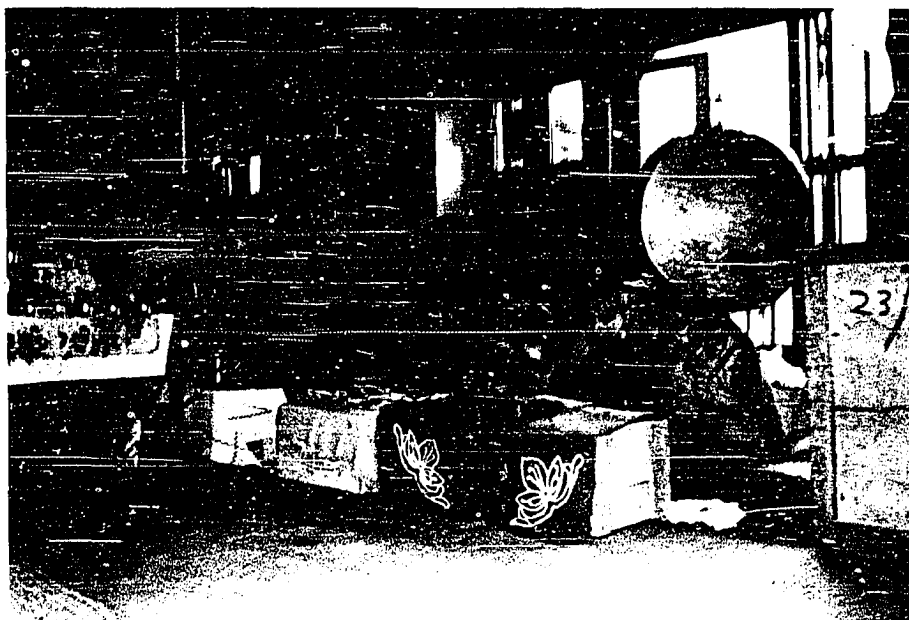


Plate 129: Lamas Doing Nāga Pūjā in a Tuladhar Home

most common refrain. In this regard, their role has been to hasten the Urāy sense of dissatisfaction with their traditional gurujus.

A third influence of the Lhasa trader Urāy has been as leaders in grafting Tibetan lamas into Tuladhar religious life.<sup>1</sup> Once lamas with whom they were formerly acquainted arrived, the Urāy traders made donations to help them and began calling them to perform rituals. Tuladhars have patronized the Tibetan monasteries actively and even built the Maitreya gompa at Svayambhū. Several Urāy actively encourage their friends to call lamas for pūjās.

Among the Tuladhars, contemporary lamas are highly regarded and respected. Over half of the households in my sample had called them to do a ritual in the past five years. Urāy often turn to Tibetan lamas for rituals of protection and purification. Over three years, I noted: a pacification pūjā for a suicide; nāga pūjā for a house opening; Tārā pūjā for a family's well-being; rituals at death to help in obtaining a good rebirth for the deceased; three day meditative - fasting retreats; empowering newly made images; prognostications and divinations; preaching on Buddhist doctrine; and giving initiations. It is significant that the Tuladhars most learned on Buddhist philosophy were those who had taken an initiation with Tibetan lamas.

Although the Tuladhar view on Tibetans (whom they call "Sain" or "Bhote") in general is that they are a dirtier and more primitive group, most respect the lamas more than the Vajrācāryas as ritual

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<sup>1</sup> According to a recent report, over two hundred lamas now reside in the Kathmandu Valley (Information Office 1981: 241ff). Since the influx of refugees from Tibet since 1959, the Tibetan presence in Kathmandu has grown dramatically.



Plate 130: Tuladhar Women at a Gompa, Svayambhū



Plate 131: Lamas Doing a Homa Pūjā in an Urāy Courtyard



hierophants and as teachers of Buddhist doctrine. Their care in performing rituals, adherence to monastic discipline (especially in abstaining from alcohol and meat), meditation practice, and learning were repeatedly mentioned as a harsh contrast with the Vajrācāryas. Tuladhars recognize the general similarity between their rituals and the lamas' (though they do note the major differences, i.e. no ṭikās, fewer offerings, etc.) and point out the lamas' superior spiritual power that makes their rituals more effective.

The impact of Tibetan lamas on the Asan community is still mediated by individual Tuladhars who had Tibetan trade connections. This group, whose immediate families constitute approximately 15% of the Tuladhar population, actively enters into the local Tibetan subculture as part of its religious devotionism. A minority among them regularly calls the lamas for household rituals. The others along with other interested Urāy call lamas on an ad hoc basis, most commonly at times of illness or some other crisis.

To use only ritual employment to evaluate the lama's importance in the Tuladhar community underestimates lamaist impact for several reasons. First, though Tuladhars regard the lama rituals as superior to the Vajrācāryas', they do not call upon them for performing life-cycle rites or for yearly festivals. This is partly the result of the Urāy's conservative attitude toward their ancient traditions but also due to the fact that the Tibetan tradition has no ritual program to offer at these times as the lamas are not interested in competing with the Vajrācāryas. Second, the economics of the pūjās is a factor limiting Tuladhar involvement. Lamaist rituals are all in the realm of optional observance and cost comparatively more than

comparable Vajrācārya pūjās. For the less wealthy in the Urāy community, they are a luxury that cannot be easily afforded, even if desired. Thus, the relatively limited employment of the lamas does not reflect their popularity or standing. Tuladhars uniformly expressed a high regard for lamas as Buddhist masters; their reluctance to break with tradition and the economics of adding lamaist pūjās onto the rituals specified as part of Bahā Buddhist practice has limited the inroads of Tibetan tradition among them.

A better indicator of sympathetic regard is seen in the more individualistic realm of Tuladhar religious life. In their personal rounds at Svayambhū, most Tuladhar laymen visit the gompas and make offerings. Men of the Tuladhar Guṇlā bājan also include the gompas in the group's regular round of offerings and drum playing, indicating the community's collective's assent to honor and patronize the Tibetan tradition.

In summary, the long standing relationship between Tibetan culture and Buddhist Newars is expressed in many levels of life in Asan. Recently, lamas have come in increasing numbers to Kathmandu and are competitors with the Vajrācāryas for lay patronage, especially among the wealthier merchants led by the former Lhasa traders. In a more general sense, as living exemplars of what the Vajrācāryas have lost--spiritual power, meditation accomplishment, and learning--their presence reinforces the Urāy sense of dissatisfaction with their traditional gurujus. As competitors who divert patronage and as exemplars who inspire invidious comparison, the lamas contribute to the breakdown of the older order of Newar Buddhist tradition. However,

their masters affirm the Vajrayāna tradition, thereby allying them with the Vajrācāryas against the Theravāda movement that challenges the foundation of Vajrayāna Buddhist legitimacy.

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### The Theravāda Buddhist Movement

For the older generations of Tuladhars who are devoted to Vajrayāna tradition and who have been dissatisfied with the Vajrācāryas, the Tibetan lamas have been an alternative refuge for acquiring teachings and performing special rituals. For a growing number of (typically) younger Tuladhars, however, Vajrayāna ritualism and its guarded teachings have come to seem obscure and spiritually empty. For them, the Theravāda movement has offered a version of Buddhist tradition in tune with their interests and sensitivities. This yet further option of religious pluralism represents another important challenge to the Baha Buddhist tradition. We must examine the history of this movement and the reasons for its popularity to fully report on the religious life of the Tuladhars and to articulate the forces of change at work in Newar lay Buddhist culture.

The roots of the Theravāda movement in Nepal reach back to the Nineteenth Century in Śri Lanka. The revival of Buddhism there in the context of Sinhalese anti-Christian and anti-colonialist struggle is one outcome of the southern Buddhist encounter with modernity. From the earliest days of British rule, Sinhalese Buddhists were challenged by missionaries who adopted an aggressive and confrontational style of proselytizing. As a result, Buddhist leaders emerged who adopted some

of the missionary tactics and who emphasized doctrinal interpretations that were compatible with western positivism. A return to the Pali texts, education through printed materials, a simplified canon of belief, an emphasis on preaching by monks, communal services, and a key role for laymen were some of the components of this revival. As a result, a "new wave" of "export Buddhism" emerged, cleaned up of superstition and compatible with science. Its leaders were drawn from the new middle class of the cities so that, later, the movement was directed toward Buddhists of similar standing abroad.

A key figure in the reformed missionary movement of this Theravada revival was Anagārika Dharmapāla (1864-1933), who founded the Maha Bodhi Society (in 1891). In leading a movement centered on restoring the Buddhist monuments in India, his organization united a small but influential strata of Buddhists across Asia in working to revive their traditions (Gokhale 1977). The early Newar leaders of the Theravāda movement first learned of this tradition through the Maha Bodhi Society centered in Calcutta.

On the Newar side, interest began among the upper caste Newar Buddhists who had joined in taking a Tibetan-style ordination and lived at Kindol Vihāra, a monastery they founded in the early nineteen twenties just east of Svayambhū. The group originally united with the explicitly stated purpose of preserving Buddhism in the Newar community and they sought to do this by creating a monastery that emphasized meditation and study. Once the activities at Kindol grew in popularity, however, the Rana Government began harassing the leaders in various ways. The first inner circle of Kindol eventually fled to Burma, Śri Lanka, and the Maha Bodhi Society-founded

monasteries at Kushinagar and Sarnath. This engendered the first sustained Newar contact with the modern Theravāda-oriented activists and their movement gained the loyalty of these Newars. At these monasteries, Newar men and women studied Theravāda doctrines and translated Pali texts into Newari. A number of these early translators also went to Sri Lanka to study. Until all Kindol activists were actually expelled from Nepal in 1944, movement between Nepal and these places was unimpeded. By this time, the goal of the group was not to preserve traditional Newar Buddhism, for they saw it as decadent beyond reform; instead they were convinced that the older tradition had to be supplanted.

In this first generation of Theravādin activists, the most important Newar figure was a Tuladhar who took the ordination name of Dharmalok (c. 1898-1978). A former Lhasa trader and Tibetan disciple, Dharmalok was a founder of Kindol who later became an ordained Newar Theravādin\* bhikṣu in 1930. From the time of his ordination, he preached and published energetically on two themes: that the Theravādins were the purest Buddhist tradition and that the Vajrayānists were the most corrupt. Being a Tuladhar, Dharmalok knew a great deal about his own tradition and would denounce the Vajrācāryas scathingly from the standards of the Theravāda Vinaya. In these early years he was most influential in leading the Urāy to listen to the Theravāda Dharma and patronize its fledgling institutions.

In 1944 Rana Prime Minister Juddha Shamshe ordered all of the newly ordained Newar Theravāda monks to abandon their robes, cease preaching, stop performing ordinations, and end their printing

Buddhist tracts in Newari. He decreed that any monk who refused to abandon his robes must leave the country. As a result, eight monks and ten nuns left Nepal and settled in Kushinagar. This group founded the Dharmodaya society, an association of monks and laymen dedicated to propagating the Theravāda tradition in Nepal. They also began publishing a monthly journal.

Because of the international outcry and the intervention of the great Sri Lankan bhikṣu Narada Thera, the Rana Government allowed those expelled to return in 1946. Soon thereafter, this group got permission and established the Anandakuti Vihāra on the hillside behind Svayambhū. The Dharmodaya organization, however, was not allowed in, but several of its leaders moved to Kalimpong where it continued to organize and publish in Nepali.

With the overthrow of the Ranas in 1950, the political climate was dramatically changed so that the Theravāda leaders could organize and missionize freely. The new government's attitude was most favorable to the extent that the newly restored King, Tribhuvan, began what would become a regular tradition of royal patronage to the Theravādin institutions (Kloppenbergs 1977).

Under the leadership of the Sri Lankan educated Newar ordained by the name "Amṛtānanda", Anandakuti became the center of Theravada activism in Nepal. Amṛtānanda's preaching and publications were well received and an audience began to grow among the Tuladhars. Under his guidance, a private Buddhist school was established at Anandakuti in 1952 and in the next years Nepal would host several international Buddhist events. The most important of these was the international meeting of the World Fellowship of Buddhists which was held in 1956,

the year of the 2500th year Buddha Jayantī. Amṛtānanda also traveled internationally and drew both recognition and financial support to the Theravāda movement in Nepal.

The nineteen fifties were clearly a time of growth and consolidation for the Nepalese Theravādins. In a 1950 issue of Dharmodaya, the goals of the Theravādin activists were stated as follows:

- (1) to open Buddhist schools all over Nepal
- (2) to build a vihāra in every city or village where the majority of the people are Buddhist and have one or two become monks in residence to give religious instruction and free medical services.
- (3) to publish translated canonical texts and other books in Nepali and Newari.
- (4) to educate Nepalis to propogate Buddhism
- (5) to publish two journals, one in Nepali, one in English.
- (6) to persuade Nepalese officials to preserve ancient Buddhist monuments at Lumbini and Kapilavastu.
- (7) to encourage Buddhists of other countries to visit Nepal and ofer facilities to Buddhist scholars.
- (8) to guard against institutions of other faiths in converting people to other faiths.

(Kloppenbergr 1977)

With the exception of the first two points, this agenda has been carried out over the last thirty years.<sup>1</sup> The regular monthly Theravadin journal, "The Anandabhūmi" , publishes articles in Newari, Nepali, and English. In the realm of attracting monks and setting up monasteries, the movement seems to have made continuous progress, but at a much slower rate than initially expected. By 1977, a survey by

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<sup>1</sup>Christian missionaries, the subject of #8, were allowed in, but were not allowed to prosyletize.



Plate 132: Assembled members of the Theravāda Sangha

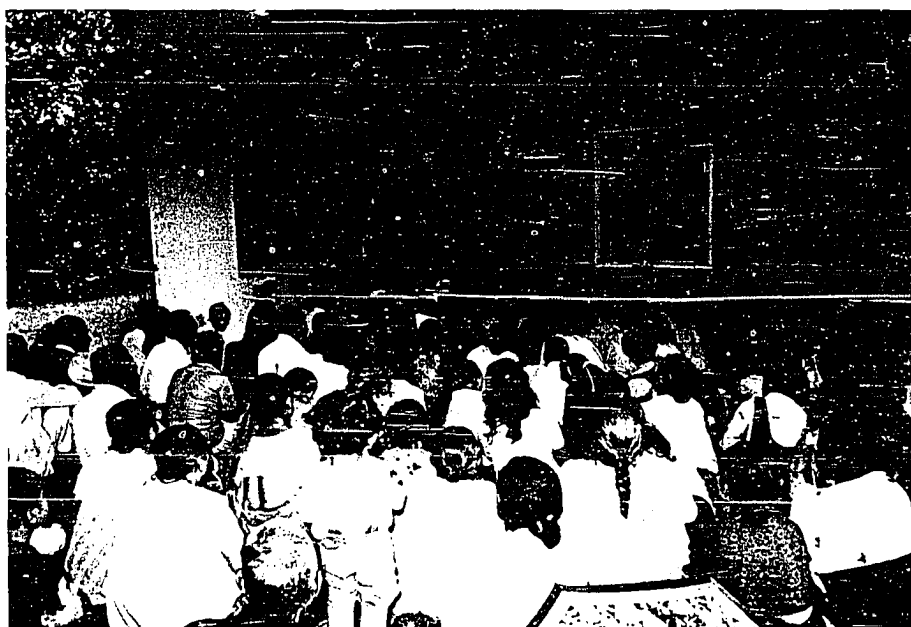


Plate 133: Sermon Hall at Anandakuti Vihāra

Kloppenbergs noted 30 bhikṣus, 10 sramaneras ("novices"), and 55 Anagārikās<sup>1</sup> in the country (1977: Appendix). There were also 15 young bhikṣus studying overseas.

Small viḥāras have been established inside the Kathmandu Valley in Patan, Kirtipur, Bhaktapur, Thimi, Vajravarahi, Bungamati and just outside of Dhulikhel and Banepa. More distant viḥāras were set up in Trisuli, Pokhara, Tansen, Butwal, Daran, Lumbini, and Chainpur. The fact that all of these settlements, even those outside the Valley, are predominantly Newar shows the extent to which the Theravadin movement in Nepal is predominantly a Newar phenomenon.

As suggested above, the Tuladhars showed great interest and provided the necessary material support for the early Theravadins to establish permanent and respected institutions. Tuladhar patronage built the Anandakuti Viḥāra and, in town, the Anagārikās' residence now called Dharmakirti, at Kathisimbhu / Śi gha:. The programs of these two institutions overlap with and complement on another.

#### Anandakuti Viḥāra

The Anandakuti Viḥāra, which is still headed by Amrtananda, has grown close to the model of a "reformist viḥāra" of modern Sri Lanka. It provides shelter and the basic resources for ordained monks to study, meditate, and serve the lay community. For more in-depth studies, such as learning Pali, young monks must be sent to the great monasteries of Sri Lanka. Within the viḥāra, senior bhikṣus lead

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<sup>1</sup>In Nepal, "Anagarika" is a title used by women who have taken the same ten precepts as bhikṣus. They do not use the classical term "bhiksuni" because this ordination lineage was lost centuries ago.

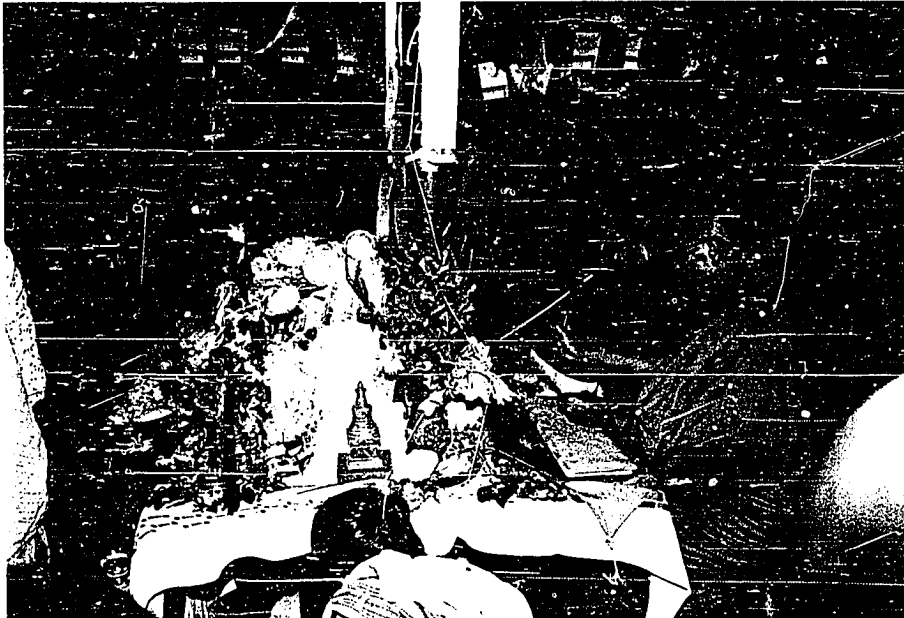


Plate 134: Bhikṣus Chanting at a Mahā Paditran



Plate 135: The Men of an Urāy Family Carrying Down a Family Image for a Mahā Paditran Ceremony

their spiritually junior monks in the study of Buddhist doctrine. Anandakuti monks are encouraged to meditate.

Regardless of their degree of scholarly and meditative interest, almost all bhikṣus serve as teachers in the monastery school, which had an enrollment of over 1,000 students in 1980.

In addition to fulfilling their traditional role as a "field of merit" for lay patrons, the only ritual the bhikṣus perform is a protection ritual called "Mahā Paditran" (Pali: Paritta), the reading of specially designated chants from the Pali Canon punctuated by the bhikṣus pouring water blessed by the chants. Anandakuti bhikṣus also frequently preach sermons for a lay audience in a pavillion of the vihāra on the mornings of the major lunar days, each morning during Guṇlā, and in private homes by invitation.

Anandakuti leaders have succeeded in introducing major new celebrations into the older cycle of Newar festivals. The relic procession done every three years in Kathmandu for Buddha Jayanti and the Kathin Dān (robe gifts to monks at the end of the rain retreat (vanavassa)) are the most important examples.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, the most important circle of Theravāda Buddhists, politically and spiritually, are at Anandakuti. In print and in person, Amritananda and other bhikṣus there organize programs for the Theravāda movement in modern Nepal.

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<sup>1</sup>As discussed in Chapter VII.

### Dharmakirti Vihāra

Just as Anandakuti is predominantly supported by male laymen, Dharmakirti is geared to draw the support of Newar women. On the major days of the lunar month, it, too, has a regular program of morning Buddha pūjā, sutta chanting, and preaching.

Dharmakirti was established in 1965 by Anagarika Dhammavati, a Patan Newar, and the Burmese-born (and Newari speaking) Mahaguna, the seniormost Anagārikā. Its buildings, patronage, and programs have expanded steadily, making Si Gha: a common point of reference among many Asan Urāy. In addition to the five group gatherings during the lunar month, the Anagārikās run a regular religious class for children and lead a study group for laymen, the Bauddha Adhyayan Goṣṭhi, which meets every Saturday evening.

Dharmakirti has been especially active in organizing lay activities that merge social service and missionizing. As of 1980, groups from Dharmakirti had visited fifty different villages in and around the Kathmandu Valley over the past decade. Other activities included setting up short-term health clinics, visits to orphanages, disaster assistance, and literacy training for women.

Dharmakirti has been increasingly successful in drawing lay Buddhists to its meditation programs. Special meditation teachers from Burma have come to lead "retreats" attended by over 100 Newar laymen, the majority of whom were Urāy. They have also been successful in attracting young women to take short-term ordinations and live in the vihāra.

The chief cause for the success of these programs among the Urāy,

Plate 136: Anagārikās of Dharmakīrti Vihāra, 1981

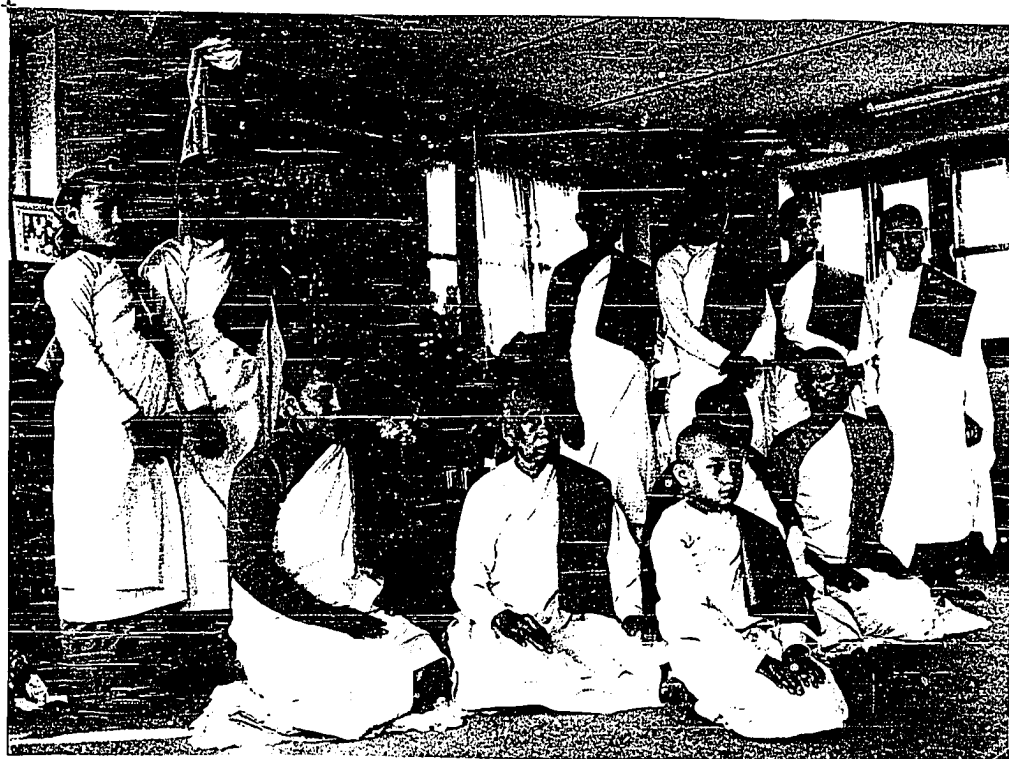


Plate 137: A Young Girl Takes a Short-Term Ordination at Dharmakīrti Vihāra

say informants, is the talented leadership of the Anagarikas Dhammavati and Mahaguna. Their very pleasant personalities, skill in teaching, careful organizing, and their example of Buddhist goodwill, have all helped earn them respect and a following. The Tuladhars call both "Gurumā", a traditional term of respect for a Vajrācārya's wife.

Dhammavati has moved slowly and carefully to insert Theravada programs into the context of the older traditions. She has led high caste Tuladhar women to accept wearing the same clothing that all others wear to the morning gatherings, thus vitiating caste and class divisions in vihāra activities. She has encouraged Newar parents to send their daughters to the vihāra for the baran cwanegu ritual confinement. They have successfully enlisted the Asan tol Jnana Mala Bhajan to perform at religious functions. Some Uray now call the Anagarikas when death strikes their families: to accompany the corpse to the ghat, to chant a shorter paditran, or for several days of Buddhist teaching and story-telling. Due to its proximity to Asan and the widespread support among the women, Dharmakirti has brought the Theravada movement very strongly into the Uray community.

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#### Theravadin Relations with Baha Buddhism

In the early years of Theravada activity, the chief bhikṣus and Vajracaryas debated and bickered both in public and in print. The exchanges were often spirited. True to the heritage from Sri Lanka, the Theravadins emphasized that their tradition was centered on the historical Buddha and that it represented genuine, uncorrupted Buddhism. Citing Pali texts to prove their points, they decried

ritualism and deity worship and emphasized that the individual was the chief focus of Buddhist observances.

The more confrontational Theravadin exponents attacked the deities of the Mahayana pantheon as human projections and, more boldly still, the decadence of the Vajracaryas in their departures from Vinaya law. As Dharmaloka says in one of these early tracts:

The Five Buddhas, Apāramitā, Karuṇāmaya, Tārā, Heruka, Cakrasamvara, Nāirātma, Vajrasattva, etc. ...these are all personified representations of metaphysical knowledge and ideas. The so-called teachers who made such representations on canvas or stones, instituted intricate rituals, and indulged in all kinds of luxuries such as meat, fish, wine, women, etc. [sic] which are specifically prohibited by the asta śīla ["eight precepts"]. All of their rituals were for the purpose of fulfilling their selfish ends and are totally opposed to the fundamental principles of Buddhism....

'Read and recite this mantra to this god or goddess and you will get all of these benefits, but reciting this secret mantra or showing the image to others [i.e. of the secret initiations] and such and such bad things will befall you,' saying such things to the innocent and ignorant believers is nothing more than casting dust in their eyes. [My translation of (Dharmaloka 1951) ]

The Urāy reaction to these polemics has been in two directions. The first has been positive and integrative. There is no question that the Theravadins have had great impact on the Urāy Buddhist groups. This is indicated by many recent trends in Asan's cultural life. Mahāpaditran has taken its place among the rituals of "conspicuous consumption" among the Uray. The Anandabhūmi, the Theravādins' monthly newspaper, has grown to circulation that reaches over half of the Tuladhar families in Asan. Tuladhars attribute the decline in their sacrificing animals is due to the bhiksus' influence.<sup>1</sup> The Tuladhar

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<sup>1</sup> However, this theme has also been represented in modernist Vajracārya tracts. Pro-Theravādin advocates also deride the Vajracāryas for their rituals in which animals are sacrificed.



practice of dalan danegu brata, say informants, is more rarely observed because of the fact that Urāys are more interested in Theravadin vipassanā practice.

For many, these criticisms and alternatives feed into the general dissatisfaction with the Vajrācāryas that had already surfaced long before. The Theravādins have been adept at providing the doctrinal ammunition needed to reject the Vajrācāryas' religious legitimacy. These ardently Theravadin Urāy regard the Vajrācārya ritualism in their midst as a mere formality, or worse, as a joking matter, but with rare exceptions they all still call their Guruju to do their pūjās.<sup>1</sup>

The other Urāy response was resentment against the Theravadin exponents. This group expressed a dissatisfaction with the quality of the bhikṣus, and how their easy life contrasted with the Arhats in their own texts. Recalling the polemical Mahāyāna teachings on the limitations of the "Śrāvakayāna", these Urāy rejected the bhikṣus' interpretations as simplistic and disrespectful. The Lhasa traders were prominent in this camp.

Other factors that cooled the Uray ardor for the Theravādins were well-publicized scandals in the 1950s among the first generation of Newar bhikṣus. Several early leaders broke their vows and fled the country in disgrace. The 1956 assassination of Sri Lankan Prime Minister Bandaranaike by a bhikṣu also added to the Newar sense of distrust in the Theravāda movement. These setbacks forced the leaders

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<sup>1</sup> However, individuals in this group often foreshorten their obligatory Vajrācārya pūjās and ceremonies.

to adopt a lower and less acerbic profile, with most attention devoted to their institution building. •

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### Analysis of Theravādin Popularity and Its Limitations

According to my surveys, about 35% of the Urāy households in Asan have one or more family members who attends Dharmakirti or Anandakuti regularly. 45% of the households show intermittent attendance, with no regular involvement in special programs. The remaining 20% of the Asan Urāy never attend and express some measure of dislike for the Theravādins. This is usually for two reasons: doctrinal or anti-bhikṣu sentiment. Tuladhar men are disproportionately represented among those who hold this opinion.

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It is clear that a large segment of the Tuladhar caste has shifted its sense of Buddhist identity, to varying degrees, toward the Theravādin tradition. The ability of Theravādin sangha specialists to teach a clearly defined doctrine contrasts dramatically with the inability of the Vajrācāryas to explain their complex and secret Vajrayāna Dharma. Moreover, the bhikṣus' de-emphasis of ritualism has fed the Uray community's impatience with traditions pervaded by numerous pūjās that they barely comprehend. Finally, the Theravadins draw upon international resources to fund their institutions and guide their efforts. From the "export Buddhist" missionary experience in Sri Lanka, there is a large body of readily available textual literature and institutional guidance that has helped the Nepalese promote their

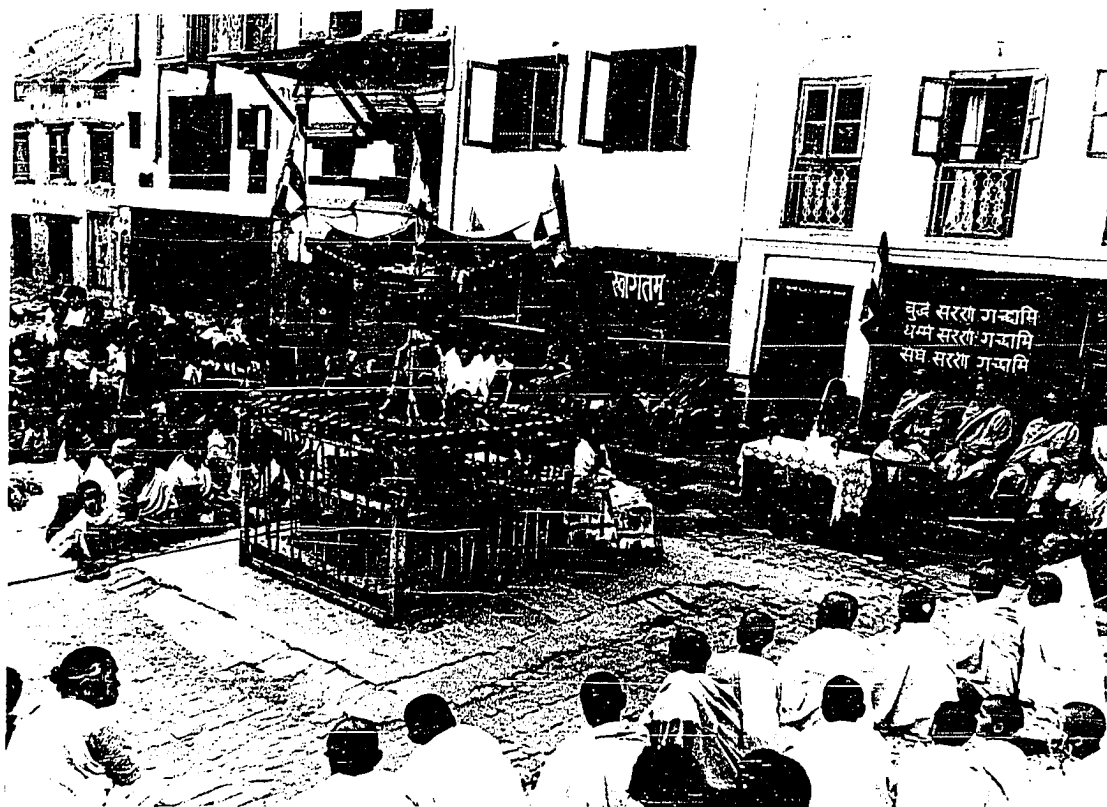


Plate 138: Bhiksus Attend a Buddha Pūjā at an Urāy Pañca Buddha Chaitya (Note the sign in the right back that states the three refuges)

movement. The Vajrācāryas, by contrast, have lost their local resource base, cultivated little awareness of the outside world and have lost contact with the classical polemical weapons within their own textual tradition that could serve as a basis for critiquing the śrāvakas in their midst. In the competition between these two groups in such areas as teaching, meditation, cultural performance, or exemplifying Buddhist values, only a very few Vajrācāryas can even provide a contest with the bhikṣus. The contrast between the celibate, Vinaya-observant sangha of bhikṣus and Anagārikās with the liquor-drinking, and married householder Vajrācārya sangha is defined in Theravādin terms and therefore extreme. Nonetheless, the Theravādins have been successful at promulgating this standard and this has certainly added to the Urāy dissatisfaction with the Vajrācāryas as leaders of Bahā Buddhism.

The Theravādin movements' success must also be explained by its being especially in tune with modern Newar society. Although the Urāy men have been active and important to the Theravādin successes, particular note must be made of the role of upper class Newar women in accounting for this movement's success. Among the Urāy, women have begun to approach men in literacy rates and in a wider awareness in all areas of human endeavor, including religion. With inspiring women as leaders and exemplars, and with programs directed toward expanding the Newar woman's formerly circumscribed awareness in reading, traveling outside the home, and in meditational practice, the Theravādins have tapped a realm of experience that modern lay women have found most attractive and compelling. The Theravādins have not pushed their followers to abstain from the Vajrācārya-prescribed

rituals and so have eliminated the possibility of dissonance for the women of the house who are key figures in household observances.

For those Newars influenced by western ideologies such as positivism, democracy, social equality, and communal uplift, the Theravādins' conscious denunciations of caste-ism and the social betterment programs have been welcomed and well-supported. The emphasis on clearly defined doctrinal belief and the Theravādin criticism of blind superstition have been attractive this type of individual. The programs linking Nepalese Buddhists to the international world also draws those with a "modern outlook" and an urge toward more distant horizons.

The Theravādin tradition expresses modernizing tendencies in yet a third way. In the Dharmakirti programs there is often an element of competition: quiz contests on Buddhist subjects, art contests, meticulously noted lists of patrons on projects. This competitiveness feeds into the ethos of individualism, a tendency that is a central component of modernity in Asan. The person, not the family, is the common focus of Theravādin endeavor.

The Theravādins have also cultivated the patronage of wealthy families and has thereby been drawn into the drama of ongoing urban Kathmandu society. That the Theravāda movement represents a modernizing influence among the Tuladhars just as it, in a paradox common to most reform movements, claims legitimacy based upon restoring the ancient tradition of "pure Buddhist" practice to the community (Geertz 1972).

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We have made the case for the popularity of Theravada Buddhism, but it is important not to overemphasize the movement's impact or the inevitability of its full ascendancy among the Tuladhars.<sup>1</sup> It still seems unlikely that the Theravadins will displace the Vajrayana tradition among the Uray for several reasons. First, the family cultic life and the festivals, those aspects of tradition that underlie the society's well-being, are constructed of myriad strands of Vajrayana doctrine and practice. Newar Buddhists are still deeply respectful of the power and worthiness of their ancient traditions. There could be serious repercussions for abandoning the pūjā offerings to one god, or in moving an image, so the tradition is acted upon even when little else remains but the prescription to make offerings.

Second, we must separate out the disrespect for the current Vajracarya caste from actual disrespect for the Vajrayana tradition, for the former would be a majority opinion Tuladhars, while the latter constitutes a very small minority. Just because the recent generations of priests have fallen from high spiritual standing does not mean that Uray have stopped believing in the potential power of the tradition's rituals, gods, or former saints. The respected Tibetan lamas also shore up this Vajrayana affirmation. Even among the ladies who attend Dharmakirti on a full moon morning, upon leaving the

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<sup>1</sup>This struggle between Vajrācāryas--a married Mahayana-Vajrayana Buddhist sangha-- and bhikṣus -- of a strictly celibate Hīnayāna-oriented sangha -- may have been a central feature in the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Throughout the region, a Buddhist order with Vajrayāna ritual dominance-- perhaps similiar to Bahā Buddhism-- was firmly established. In these places, later "reform movements" eventually succeeded in restoring the a Hinayana sangha order, but with cultural survivals reflecting the earlier pluralism (Briggs 1951; Luce 1969; Paranvitane 1928). The weikzas in Burma seems to have surviving Vajrayāna elements (Mendelson 1969).

vihāra many still get into line to get Vajrayāna blessings from a Vajrācārya who sits near the stupa offering his empowered text and mantras to them. Many then go to Jana Bahā to make offerings to Jana Bahā's Avalokiteśvara. Even the most devout Theravādin activists have not given up their household cults such as the Āgam Dya, Digu Dya , or their Guruju-derived Nikhan meditations. To end the dissonance between their old Vajrayāna-based traditions and the world view of the "export Theravāda" movement, laymen would have to renounce nearly all of their traditions. This has not happened and is most unlikely in the near future.

Related to this, Newar political modernization movements have a chief characteristic of affirming Newar cultural identity. In this case, the revival of Newar nationalism and agitation for cultural uplift helps the Vajrācāryas' cause since most Urāy believe that their tradition in the past was the basis of a great civilization. One central part of modern Newar political consciousness is that this greatness must not be lost. To the extent that this conviction supports the commitment to a family's own cultural activities, Newar Vajrayāna Buddhism will continue to be affirmed. It is inconceivable that this sentiment would encourage a rapid, wholesale change to Theravāda Buddhism.

### CONCLUSION:

#### Religious Field and Buddhist Tradition in the Tuladhar Community

The Theravādins will continue to consolidate their position in Newar society but it seems likely that they have reached close to the limits of expansion. Given their inability to exact exclusive patronage or doctrinal orthodoxy, the Theravādins will have Urāy support that simply adds their activities onto the older Bahā Buddhist practices. Among other Newar groups, too, and especially the urban Jyāpus, the Theravādins have gained considerable support. This movement may be strengthening the Buddhist orientation of these lower caste groups, reversing Rana-era patterns of Hinduization (Rosser 1964), but it restores little of Bahā Buddhism. Thus, the Theravāda movement has come to occupy a now secure niche but not a dominant position in the Tuladhars' Buddhist practice.

The Theravādin sangha teaches the basic ideas shared by all Buddhists: karma, samsāra, puṇya making, observing śīla (moral conduct"), etc. Its vipassanā meditation is likewise common to the earliest stages of all branches of Buddhist meditative training. From the perspective of the Vajrayāna, the Theravāda programs are not wrong, they are just not the most complete or highly developed expression of the Dharma: this point was made repeatedly to me by learned Vajrācāryas and Dekka-initiated Tuladhars. Thus, depending upon the older Bahā Buddhist establishment's response to modern changes, it could "put the Śrāvakas in their place" and reassert its doctrinal ascendancy, or else lose its religious legitimacy. The diffuse response of the Vajrācāryas to this situation and their early



failure to create any modern institution which would respond to the bhikṣus and speak forcefully for their tradition has abetted the Theravādin successes.

To predict the outcome of this struggle, one must assess the weight of an ancient and well-entrenched tradition as it collides with the the forces of modernity that have impact in almost every corner of life.

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As discussed in the preceeding Chapter, the Bahā Buddhist tradition has characteristically existed in a wider religious field including Newar Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism. In the contemporary setting, both of the former have maintained their vitality and have been joined by another group, the Theravādin sangha. Thus, the Vajrācāryas now compete with Brahmans, lamas, and now Theravādins for patronage, ritual prestige/power, and doctrinal standing. We indicate the extent of the religious field in Asan in Figure IX-1.

Although the Vajrācāryas have little challenge from the Hindu purohits, the lamas and Theravādins have made a strong impact on their dominance. This has been especially so with their greatest patrons, the Urāy. However, The central role of the Vajrācāryas in the numerous Tuladhar household rites means that their dominance will not be quickly or easily ended.

Seen from the perspective of the lay community, these changes have not altered the fundamental structure of their religious

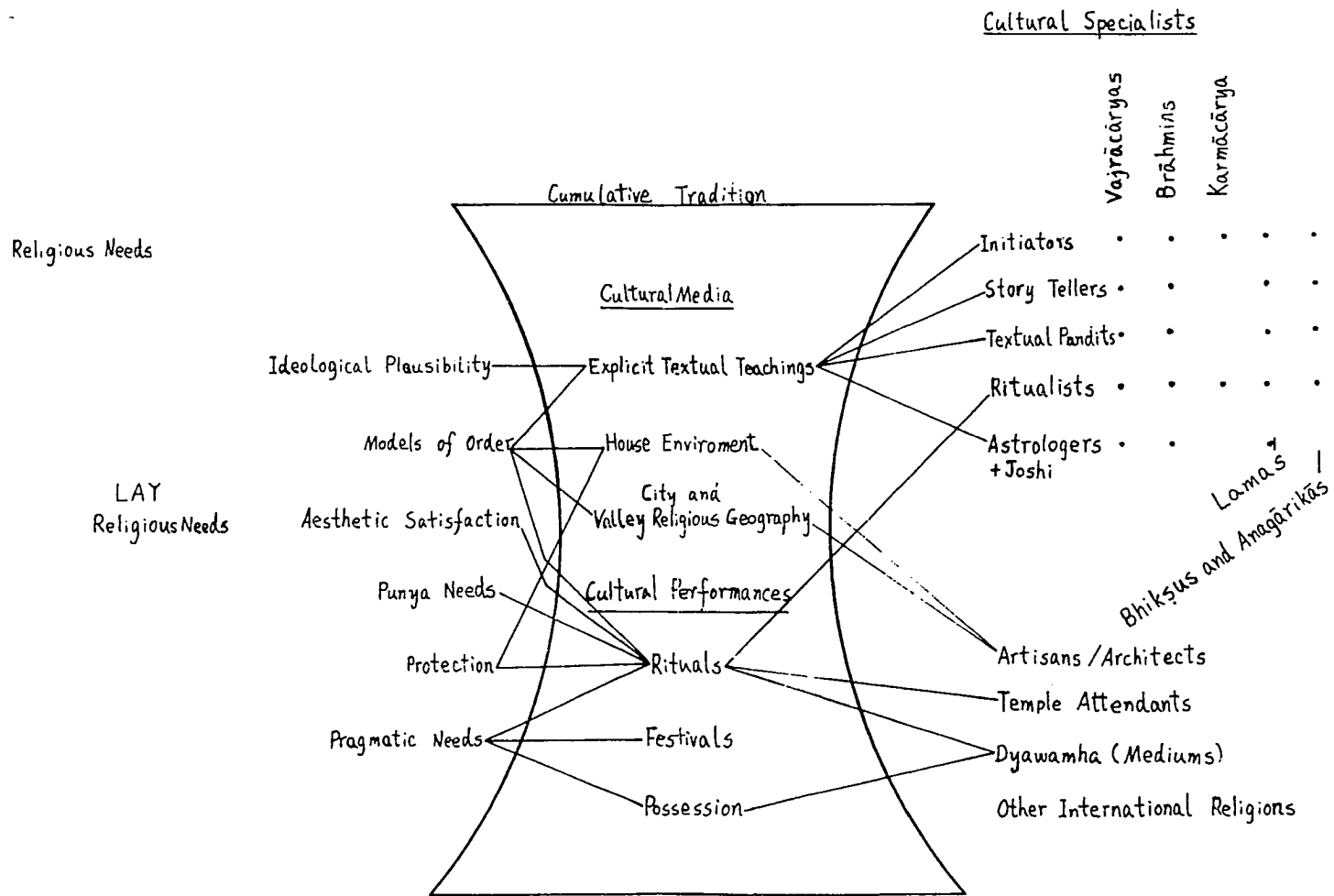


Figure IX—I The Religious Field in Asan Tol

situation. The Theravādins (as the lamas centuries before) have been added on to their "religious field" of possible choices for patronage. It is neither a Tuladhar disposition nor a widespread wish to give any single Buddhist tradition exclusive standing. The Tuladhars are first of all Tuladhars, Newars who follow the Buddha Dharma. For them, all offer a fruitful "field of merit" for punya-producing dāna, rituals for protection, and a meaningful cultural agenda to choose from. Their patronage has led to increasing pluralism in the Kathmandu Valley's Buddhist traditions. In the following chapter, we demonstrate how this attitude is reflected in the patterns of belief.

CHAPTER X  
Patterns of Religious Belief in the Tuladhar Community

Our portrait of Buddhism in Asan cannot be complete without describing how the community regards its own tradition and understands Buddhist teachings. As in many other dimensions of life in Asan, we find great intellectual complexity and individual diversity. The extent of this variance is especially noteworthy across generations and between the sexes. Our studies revealed that advancing age correlates with Buddhist lore and teachings; that women know a great deal of the avadāna/ jātaka lore but are shallow on doctrine where men are stronger; that literacy correlates with advanced awareness and understanding of the teachings; and that family traditions of activism and study can fully reverse all of these tendencies.

We begin by discussing the central concepts that are shared by the Tuladhars and examine their comprehension of ideas central to Mahāyāna- Vajrayāna tradition. We then present a series of individual portraits to show the extent to which Tuladhars vary in terms of their religious orientations. For this purpose, we employ a model of belief that can be arranged along two different axes: the nature of predominant Buddhist belief-- Vajrācārya, Theravādin, Lamaist-- and the extent to which modern influences have been influential.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Before beginning this description, I must briefly mention the methodology by which this data was obtained. This aspect of the study was done near the end of the three-year research period, after I had outlined the dissertation and completed the task of documenting the

### The Nature of "Religious Belief"

When considering the "belief patterns" among Buddhist laymen, it is important to be clear about what the nature of belief is in a society dominated by ancient traditions. By "religious belief" we mean an intellectual framework that an individual subscribes to and identifies with as his own. For most Tuladhars, this domain of life is not the center of his religious identity. As we have pointed out, Newar tradition has a strong internal dynamic that dictates a continuous agenda of activity for which intellectual understanding is not a prime factor. Many facets of the Tuladhar religious life are carried on without any overt or conscious attention to or foundation

"practical", socially-observable religious life in Asan. To elicit the Tuladhar understanding of their religious observances and beliefs, I designed two questionnaires. The first employed photographs. I selected an initial sample of over 114 black and white pictures from my files under seven categories: life cycle rites (12 photographs), rituals (15), festivals (15), religious officiants (14), deities (35), cultural media (11), and miscellaneous subjects (12). At this point I was capable of selecting the most important elements under these subject headings and formulating key questions to accompany the pictures. After considerable pretesting, this large group of photographs then was shown to a representative sample of the Tuladhar community. We showed the questionnaire to thirty-five respondents, both male and female, whose ages ranged from nine to sixty-eight. Pictures proved to be excellent stimuli for eliciting responses. In some cases, recognition of the subject matter of the photo was the main question; for example, the deity picture set determined the Tuladhar recognition of the Hindu-Buddhist pantheon using the images from the local Tuladhar experience. Another approach was to choose pictures to accompany more abstract inquiries. The concrete images opened up respondents in a way far superior to merely asking questions: instead of asking respondents to "tell me what you think of untouchability...", I showed them a picture of untouchable sweepers at work. Associated questions can also be "tacked on" to the pictorial image: (to continue the example) regarding the karmic beliefs about caste. These pictures became the occasion of valuable discussions with my Tuladhar friends and kept them interested.

The second source of information was the standard interview questionnaire which touched upon more philosophical religious subjects. This was administered as part of the in-depth, overlapping survey of twenty Tuladhar households and was designed to touch upon areas not amenable to the pictorial medium.

in personal religious belief. This aspect of tradition as "the way things are done" operates the cycle of "plausibility maintenance" (Berger 1979), directing people to perform gestures and experience realities that they come to believe in (Geertz 1972).

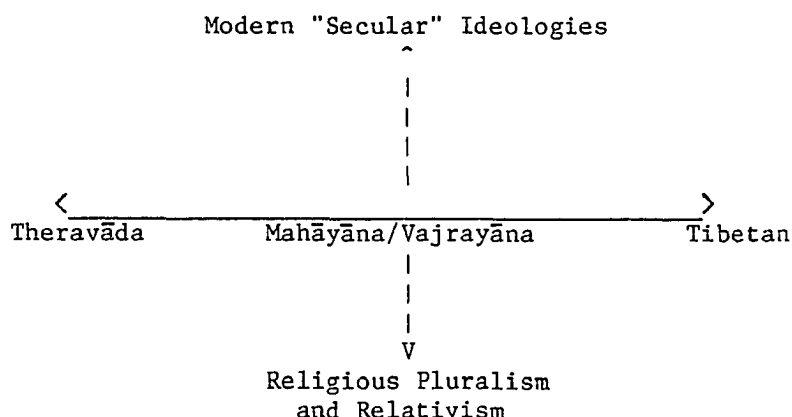
In evaluating the issue of religious belief, the problem is complicated by the fact that individuals differ in the extent to which they are intellectually inclined. For any Western intellectual carrying out an inquiry of this kind, it is easy to overestimate how important philosophical ideas and intellectual categories are in the life of an average person. Beyond the basic notions that explain the most common cultic offerings and merit-making, most Tuladhars rarely venture into the complexities of Buddhist philosophy. In common with Buddhist laymen elsewhere, Tuladhars are primarily concerned with the issue of rebirth and their making the punya necessary to positively affect their destiny. Those with the Vajrayāna Dekka and those active in the Theravādin movement are usually exceptions to this pattern.

Through their media and performances, traditions exert a "cultural press" toward patterns of individual belief (Singer 1973: 39). The task of our anthropological study, thus, is to describe the relationship between the older world view imparted by the cultural structures of Bahā Buddhism (texts and other media) and modern Tuladhar belief.

We found the fit between them to be very loose. There is a strong sense of intellectual tentativeness, even among those who will "talk Dharma" (here, "philosophy"). Most Tuladhars regard the religious stories, explanations, and philosophical theories they have heard with a degree of personal detachment. If pressed, most place distance

between their own profession of certainty and the pronouncements of tradition. It was very common for my respondents to recite a story or explain what they had heard on a given concept. When I would then ask them if they really believed this explanation, their response would be "well, how can I be sure?.... this is what I have heard.... how could I know for sure?" It was also not uncommon for Tuladhars to add that all of these accounts from ancient tradition were just men's ideas and unproven. This tentativeness and scepticism help us understand the range of ostensibly inconsistent philosophies -- ancient, Buddhist, and modern -- that do not disturb Tuladhar layman. This situation is also consistent with ancient Buddhist traditions which accept the fact of their being multiple levels of religious discourse and philosophical understanding. There is little internal press to reach philosophical consistency in Asan, a fact which renders the portrait that follows at best a mapping of the shape of beliefs in the community rather than an exact delineation. There are many avenues of truth in this loosely ordered realm of intellectual opinion.

One way of organizing the intellectual field in Asan may be graphed as follows:



Along the horizontal axis is the range of Buddhist tradition present in Kathmandu, as described in previous chapters. It is important to note that this schema does not imply an exclusivity toward one tradition that rejects the others.<sup>1</sup> The key criterion for locating an individual on these axes is the orientation toward optional observances such as pūjās, patronage, initiations, and private donations. This inclination may also include a preference for the distinctive philosophical viewpoints as well.

Tuladhars see themselves as uncompromisingly Buddhist, but do not define themselves as such through attachment to any one group.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore common for families to call their Vajrācārya guruju, favorite bhikṣus, and Tibetan lama for ritual services during the year. In some cases, Tuladhars call them all on the same day. Thus, Tuladhars view all groups within a single field of Buddhist specialists which meet their needs for pūjā, puṇya-making, and doctrinal teaching. Beyond the Vajrācārya dominance in life-cycle and festival ritualism, all of these groups-- Vajrācārya, lama, bhikṣu, and Brahman -- compete for Tuladhar dāna and following. Tuladhars have been fully involved in supporting this full continuum of Buddhist tradition in Nepal. As mentioned earlier, those Tuladhars involved in the Tibetan trade have been patrons of Tibetan monasteries, with some

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<sup>1</sup>For example, almost every Tuladhar family in Asan tol has retained the services of their traditional Vajrācārya purohit for performing life-cycle rituals and yearly festival observances. Only a few of the staunch Theravādin devotees view the issue in terms of choosing a singular religious identity.

<sup>2</sup>We have pointed out that Tibetan lamas were present in the Valley in recent centuries and that the Urāy occasionally resort to Brahmins.



even becoming lamas in Kathmandu. Similiarly, at the other end of the spectrum, Tuladhars have become ordained Theravādin bhikṣus. Most contemporary Tuladhars fall between these two extreme cases of involvement, but do adopt a regular pattern of preference among them.

The second axis records the new directions of intellectual attraction in recent times. This influence is a product of contact with the outside world, predominantly India (or mediated by India), but including the countries of Southeast Asia and distant states such as China, the Soviet Union, Britain, and the United States. On this axis, we indicate two recurrent and, in some ways, opposite orientations. The first reaches further "into" the realm of possible religious affirmation as individuals relativize Buddhism in a religious cosmos that admits the truths of Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, etc. This was most commonly expressed in the neo-Vedantin terms of modern Indian Hinduism. The second standpoint falls under the influence of recent ideologies that could be labeled "secular" (Berger 1969: 107). This includes ideologies such as materialism, postivism, Marxism, nationalism, and democracy.

Being the capital city of modern Nepal means that there has been extensive contact with many of the modern socio-intellectual movements in the world. But it is also easy to over-estimate the strength of these in Kathmandu. Since Nepal is far from the chief cultural centers in East Asia and from the West, and since outside intellectual ideas are known only in foreign languages or through problematic translations mediated across vast cross-cultural chasms, these

movements have been confined to a small group of intellectuals and the upper classes. Finally, we do not suggest that these intellectual positions on the second axis are necessarily felt to be incompatible with one another, with Buddhist philosophy, or traditional observance.<sup>1</sup> In the last section of this chapter, we locate individuals along these axes to organize this presentation.

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### PATTERNS OF CONSENSUS

In this section, we describe a composite portrait of belief in the Tuladhara community with reference to central doctrinal concepts.

#### Karma

Every informant in our study expressed belief in karma as a faculty that conditions individual destiny. Tuladhars view karma as a physical presence: it is written on the forehead (some add that it is also in the palm of the hand) and deposited in the man, that faculty centered in the human heart. Most Tuladhars believe in the ātman, a faculty that centers individual consciousness in the man, acts as the repository for karma, and later becomes the vehicle for rebirth. Individuals say that the ātman may hover around the house for a number of days after death and Tuladhars put out offerings to it.

For the Newar layman, the most important characteristic about karma is that one cannot know what one's own karmic "deposit" is. The ethos that follows from this is that one always works to make as much

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<sup>1</sup>As we will see in the final chapter, Newars are participants in the pan-Asian efforts that explore new syntheses between Buddhist and modern ideologies.

punya as possible and avoid making pāp. This is an attribute of all Buddhist laymen across Asia.

Although one cannot know one's karma with any certainty, there are certain moments at which one can discern one's general state. The most important of these are the attributes the person is born with. In Newar society, the caste status into which one is born is a prime indicator. Although Tuladhars differed about the details of how the castes in Asan should be ranked<sup>1</sup>, they were clear that Tuladhars were near the top of the caste system and that untouchables were far below according to their karmic inheritance. Other indicators of a person's karmic state are the length of life, proclivity to sickness over a lifetime, and the circumstances at death. Tuladhars were well aware that individuals could fall quickly from states of high karmic standing due to pāp.

For the Tuladhars, life conditioned by karma does not lead to a fatalistic attitude. It is regarded as an ongoing, changeable presence though it remains unknown and subliminal. Tuladhars are well aware that punya made in the present life can result in favorable effects within the present lifetime<sup>2</sup>.

Most Tuladhars thought that karma is not the sole factor conditioning their existence. Chance, "luck", the influence of deities, planets, climate, and physical laws may also act independently of karmic law. (Karma may also block the effects of

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<sup>1</sup>Only 40% of my informants believed that the Vajrācāryas should be ranked above the Brahmins, 50% said Brahmins should be considered first, and only 10% said that among Buddhist castes all were equal.

<sup>2</sup>Several informants stated that children can make pāp in their youth that will gravely affect their lives as adults.

these as well.) Since karma theory can subsume all other systems of causal explanation, it is the ultimate explanatory framework that Tuladhars resort to.

Karmic influence is felt to be "contagious", or better, socially transmittable: one person's karmic destiny may affect others. Family members, for example, may suffer or prosper due to an elder's karma. This effect is especially recognized between husbands and wives.

A large part of Newar Buddhist religious life is directed toward improving one's karma through punya making. Pūjās make punya for the patron. Likewise, dāna offerings to religious figures are made with the accrued punya clearly in mind. Tuladhars do not keep punya account books, but they are aware of the need to make as much punya as is possible given their economic means. Newar tradition specifies that individuals acquire vast stores of punya when they sponsor the great patronage rituals (Samyak, Pañca Dān, Bahā Pūjā, Tīrtha Jātrā, etc.). It is clear that punya making and its rewards (i.e. wonderful rebirths) have been the central motivation of those who still sponsor these events.

Tuladhars are also very aware of the need to avoid making bad karma. The Pañca Śīlā ("five moral principles": not to kill, steal, lie, indulge in sexual misconduct, covet) is known by almost all adults. These principles are also significant guidelines for individuals. The ideal Newar Buddhist is someone who is compassionate, generous, and honest with everyone. (We were impressed by the number of such people in our experience in Asan.)

Two of the precepts deserve special comment. Tuladhars are known in their own community and by outsiders for eschewing violence. This

has affected the history of interpersonal relations and one of the reasons that Kathmandu is a peaceful city.<sup>1</sup> Most Tuladhars extend their non-violence to animals as well. Although this has not led to widespread vegetarianism, most Tuladhars do not sacrifice animals for puja or kill the rats they trap each night in their shops.<sup>2</sup>

The precept not to lie, say many Tuladhars, is impossible to observe. To do business in present day Nepal and to bargain effectively requires, they say, makugu khañ ("untrue statements").<sup>3</sup> Many Tuladhars view this weight of "business pāp" the way Buddhist farmers view their tilling the soil-- a necessity that requires punya to offset the negative karmic burden.

Beyond the belief in this life-long cause and effect karma relationship, I could discover no single pattern in the Tuladhar understanding of how karma "adds up". Most had no in-depth idea and were content to rely on the assurance that making punya and avoiding pāp was their proper religious response.

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### Deities

Only slightly less ubiquitous is the Tuladhar belief in the existence of deities. Most point out their view of the divine hierarchy of Buddhas above Bodhisattvas who, in turn, preside over all

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<sup>1</sup>The Tuladhars themselves see this pacificism as a character trait that led to their overthrow by the Parbatiyas. I could discover only two recollections of murders in Kathmandu over the last 50 years.

<sup>2</sup>Instead, they release them every morning outside the town boundaries.

<sup>3</sup>About 30% disagreed, saying that this view is a recent one and untrue according to Buddhist teachings.

other supermundane deities. Among these are the Hindu dyas, a statement communicated iconographically in the image of Shristikantha Avalokiteśvara. All who receive pūjā offerings--Ganesh, Siva, Padmapani, chaityas ("Ciba dya")--are referred to as "dya".

Most Tuladhars view the world as everywhere populated by dyas of various sorts. Although there is considerable scepticism, too, most still believe in minor ghost-like spirits called khyā.<sup>1</sup> Dya are present in this world, available for pūjā offerings, and are regarded as powers embodied with personalities that can affect the world according to their divine desires. Tuladhars vary considerably in their choice of devotional involvement with the vast pantheon of deities in their tradition but there is still no widespread doubt over their ontological reality. Dya can also possess people and speak through them: as mentioned in Chapter III, dya va:mha ("mediums") are common in Newar society.

At the time for pūjā offerings, the anthropomorphic nature of Tuladhar belief is clearest. As we have seen, the basic order of pūjā contents is based upon satisfying the deities' five senses. Some dya are given special offerings based upon their mythic personalities.<sup>2</sup> All gods, with the possible exception of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, are also capable of anger. (And even the latter may be indifferent.) Tuladhars avoid the dyas' displeasure by showing respect to the god's shrine and being in the proper state of purity when making offerings. Prasād, returned and empowered offerings, invests the god's power back

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<sup>1</sup> Some attribute the current lack of sightings to the introduction of widespread electric lighting which caused the khyā to flee.

<sup>2</sup> For example, some take meat, some do not; Ganesh likes sweets, Basundhara gold, etc.

into Tuladhars society. Tikā marks on foreheads and flowers on the crown of the head are almost always seen.

Tuladhars differ over the relationship between punya and pūjā. Most view offerings to a dya as punya producing and among these, most felt that there was no difference in the karmic benefit derived from worshipping Siva as opposed to the celestial Bodhisattva Padmapani.

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### Bodhisattvas

Bodhisattvas are ideal beings in the Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna tradition who simultaneously strive for their own enlightenment and to be of spiritual benefit to all beings (Wayman 1973: 398). Bodhisattvas may assume deity or human status (Basham 1981; Robinson 1966). The most notable celestial Bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara, is thought of in local mythology as a powerful being who acts on petitioners' prayers, brings the rains, and subdues lesser deities. Avalokiteśvara can also assist human beings in reaching Amitābha's paradise, Sukhāvatī, where attaining Enlightenment is guaranteed. Monks and householders may also consider themselves as Bodhisattvas by trying to fulfill the ten pāramitās (Wayman 1973: 409) after taking a vow to work for bodhicitta ("an enlightened mind") and to help compassionately all beings achieve that goal. In every Vajrayāna ritual Tuladhars sponsor, the purohit generates bodhicitta and repeats the Bodhisattva vow.

We have noted that Avalokitesvara is by far the most popular deity among the Tuladhars. Although only half of the Tuladhars recognized this dya as a Bodhisattva, all knew that the deity was a distinctly Buddhist dya. Some say that their last hope for avoiding hell is the intervention of the Karuṇāmaya and Tuladhars are

especially aware of the deity's capacity of acting out of compassion for and granting assistance to suffering humanity, as the name "Karuṇāmaya" suggests. Most were aware of the fact that this deity is both male and female.

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Few Tuladhars know the identity of Vajrapaṇi, the Bodhisattva who protects Newar Buddhist Buildings. Fewer still know that Maitreya, the next Buddha, is now a Bodhisattva.

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Most Tuladhars know the basic teachings describing the Bodhisattva ideal, with the typical definition being someone who works unselfishly for the good of other people. A person suffering ill-treatment with patience may be referred to, half-jokingly, as a bodhisattva, but at present most Tuladhars do not think of it as a relevant ideal for human beings. In the present time, most Tuladhars say that human Bodhisattvas are very rare; some said there were none in this stage in the Kali Yuga.

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### Swarga and Narak ("Heaven and Hell")

Tuladhars strongly believe in spheres of rebirth outside of the human realm and outside of "this earth". The Vaisnava paradise Baikuntha was known by most. We have discussed the ubiquity of Sukhāvātī, the Mahāyāna paradise ruled by Amitābha, in the Bahā Buddhist tradition; most informants know of it only as a Buddhist paradise and were not aware of Avalokiteśvara as the reigning



Bodhisattva there. Because one needs vast quantities of punya, it is very difficult for people to attain rebirth in Sukhāvatī so that Tuladhars aware of the concept did not think of it as a serious possibility. Several Tuladhars said that one had to perform the dalan danegu brata to have the possibility of gaining rebirth in Sukhāvatī and others mentioned Dekka as a prerequisite.

Most Tuladhars likewise believe that for them rebirth in narak ("hell") is a definite possibility. Almost half of my informants mentioned that to them narak would be rebirth as a sweeper, a butcher, or a fisherman.

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### Nirvāṇa

Tuladhars understand Nirvāṇa as a state to be reached in a distant rebirth after many lifetimes devoted to attaining spiritual perfection. Most identified Nirvāṇa as an attribute of a Buddha. Given the exalted manner in which Tuladhars view the Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, almost no one took attaining Nirvana as a relevant human pursuit. Those informants inclined toward the Theravāda movement said that this attainment was a common subject of the bhikṣus' and anagārikās' sermons.

Despite this, most recognized that Nirvāṇa was the ultimate goal of all Buddhists, something that made them different from Hindu laymen.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The latter's highest goal, they said, was merely swarga ("heaven") in contrast to the Buddhist Nirvāṇa. Tuladhars who knew of the two knew that their paradise, as a theatre for enlightenment was quite different.

Reaching Nirvāṇa also was commonly given an operational definition: one reaches Nirvāṇa when Yama Rājā, the Lord of Death, does not see the person because he no longer has any karma left.

Almost every Tuladhar stated that he believed that no one in their midst--bhikṣu, lama, Vajrācārya, Brahman, or sanyassin--was capable of reaching Nirvāṇa.

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### Other Topics In Buddhist Philosophy

From a topic analysis of terminology used by Tuladhar informants, we can point to a number of other concepts that are prevalent in the religious discourse of the Tuladhar community.

Āyur is the "life force" necessary for existence. At birth one has an endowment of āyur based upon one's karma. When one's āyur is finished, only divine intervention can forestall death.

Karuṇā is a compassionate faculty associated with Padmapani Avalokiteśvara, a fact encoded in this deity's epithet, "Karuṇāmaya". Many spoke of this empathetic quality as an ideal they should cultivate as followers of Buddha Dharma.

Pāramitā is a term that about half of our informants know as a quality of a Bodhisattva. Several could name the "Six Paramitas".

Bodhicitta was defined in several different ways: as a vow to reach enlightenment, the thought of enlightenment, and the enlightened mind.

The term ekacitta is used very commonly for describing the ideal state reached through meditation. Most Tuladhars say that the

different methods prescribed by the Theravadin vipassanā, the Newar Nikhān and Dekka, and Tibetan disciplines all lead, if properly practiced, to ekacitta. To reach Nirvāṇa, they said, it is necessary to realize this state.

Definitions of śūnyā led to a range of responses. The word śūnyā is known by almost everyone, for it is used to designate zero. As a Buddhist term, some Tuladhars understand śūnyā as a quality that all phenomenal existence has. As such, explained several informants, it is the basis for saying that Nirvana and samsāra are the same, a classical Mahāyāna teaching. Several linked śūnyā to the manifestation of the myriad deities. As one said, "There is only one dya and his name is śūnyā."

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Finally, the Tuladhars are especially unaware of the Vajrayāna symbols that pervade the religious geography and are employed in the rituals. Most could not explain the meaning of the Vajrācāryas' vajra and ghanta ("bell"). They did not make any Buddhist association of the ŚrīDevī Yantra as almost everyone said it was "Saraswati's heart." The well-known eyes that mark the harmika of almost every Newar stupa were likewise a source of confusion. Just as few identified these eyes as Vairocana's, few knew anything precise about the Ādi-Buddha theory of cosmic emanation.

#### Tuladhars as They View Their Own Tradition

Most Tuladhars still hold the view that their traditions are unique and of value. This is partially due to their great antiquity,

for the Newar Vajrayāna tradition, according to the Svayambhū Purāṇa, even predates Sākyamuni Buddha. According to this same source, the Kathmandu Valley was one site where the forces of the Buddhist cosmos were physically manifested. Svayambhū is the relic of that hierophony and its presence is regarded as a special blessing to the Newars.

All Tuladhars mention the decline of their older traditions, a fact of life that everyone older than thirty has seen in many ways. Many believe that the beginning of their Buddhist decline began with the loss of monasticism and the imposition of caste order, both of which they date to the reign of the Newar king Jaya Sthiti Malla. The devolution of the Vajrācāryas' standing as gurus and ritualists is the subject of many Tuladhar conversations. In the right mood, almost all could be cynical about all religious practitioners in their midst.

Tuladhars see these developments as part of the general decline of civilization that is predicted in their texts and by Hindu tradition in the Kāli Yuga. A few said that only with the coming of Maitreya, after millenia, will this decline be reversed.

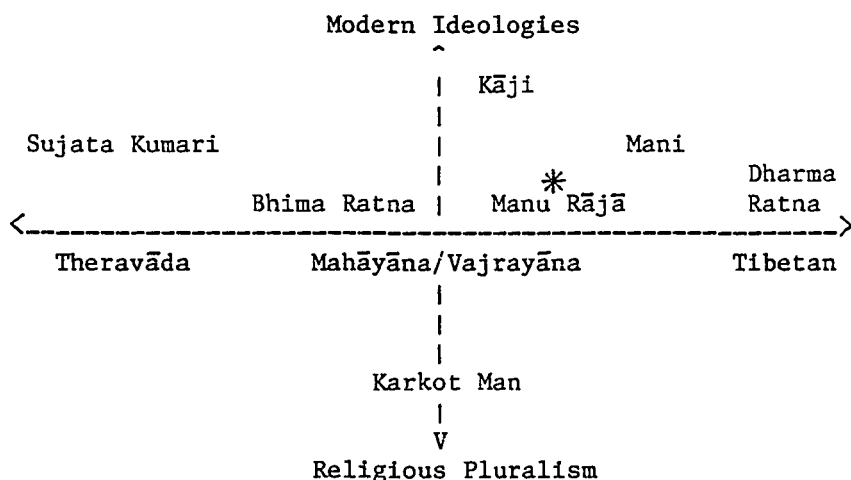
Although Tuladhars are, to varying degrees, disenchanted with their Vajrācārya priests and moving away from practicing Buddhism solely through their ritualism, they still insist that, as individuals, they remain firmly grounded in "Buddha Dharma". Even in families surrounded by western luxury goods, the belief in deities, karma, and the efficacy of pūjā and meditation has not declined very significantly. In Asan, the light of Vajrayāna Buddha Dharma has dimmed considerably and most individuals have lost a clear sense of the classical Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna tradition they have inherited. Nonetheless, just as the religious geography remains as the object of

mass devotion, so the most elementary foundations of Buddhist teachings persist as a refuge that the Tuladhars are not willing to forsake.

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### PORTRAITS IN INDIVIDUAL BELIEF<sup>1</sup>

The religious life histories presented here are selected to provide a representative sample of the spectrum of Buddhist belief in Asan. The general shape of belief with our sample of individual portraits is given here (and with each case) in the following figure:



#### Manu Rājā

At the age of 66, Manu Rājā has seen the transition from the Rana Period to democratic Nepal. As a ready-made clothing manufacturer and merchant, he has adapted well to the changing times so that his large family is quite prosperous.

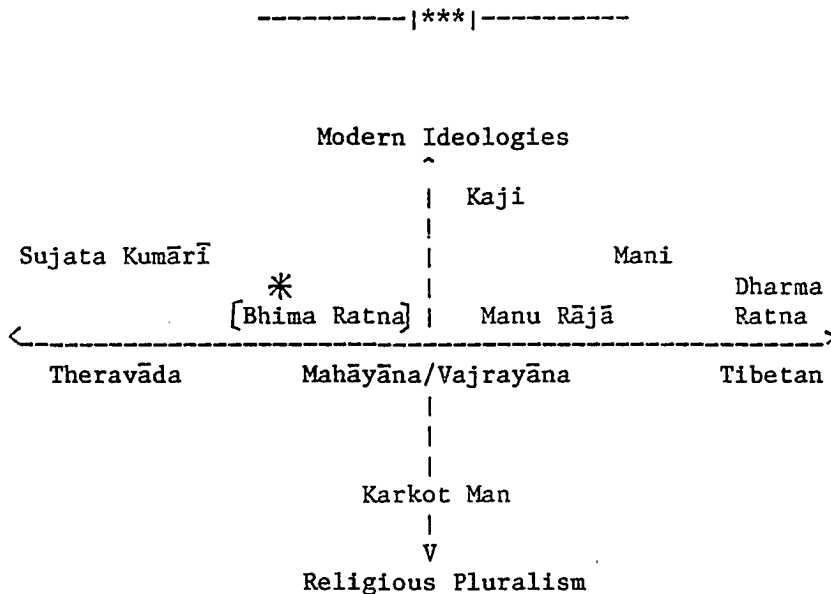
<sup>1</sup>I have used pseudonyms in this chapter.

Manu Rājā (hereafter MR) grew up in a family that followed the practices of the Newar Vajrayāna tradition energetically. He has performed all of the major bratas, attended several years of tīrtha pūjās, and led a bahā pūjā that was sponsored by his family. He has learned a great deal of the lore and legend of his tradition and can refer to the Svayambhū Purāṇa, Lalitavistara, and Jātaka stories to discuss his understandings. He also knows much of the oral tradition associated with recent events such as Vajrācāryas returning from puruṣan cwanegu, secret lore on initiations, etc.. MR still participates actively in several guṭhis, does his daily nikhan meditation, and calls his family guruju for many special pūjās and for the daily reading of the family's Pancarakshā text during Guṇlā. He is dissatisfied with the present generation of Vajrācāryas, but still calls them for all major rituals.

MR expresses admiration for the great lamas who still study and meditate, but he has only called them once, for a nāga pūjā many years ago. He has seen the Theravāda movement develop, but he has, for the most part, kept his distance. As he says, "Although Gurumā (Anagārikā Dhammavati) is persuasive, the bhikṣus bicker and compete with one another," and adds, "The Theravāda stories are good, but sometimes they are not mature enough for me." He did consent to allowing his daughters to spend their baran cwanegu confinement with the Anagārikās of Dharmakīrti Vihāra. MR refers to the Theravādins in classical Mahāyāna terms as "śrāvakas" and asserts that the Bodhisattva ideal is a higher goal and teaching. He disagrees with the secrecy that the Vajrācāryas insist on maintaining for the Dekka initiation and tantric teachings. MR sees this as another destructive aspect of the present

situation: "This secrecy will result in the death of these teachings in our tradition." MR already knows many aspects of the "inside" Vajrayāna philosophy, something he has picked up from conversations with friends. He hopes to take the Dekka initiation sometime soon if it can be arranged.

Although he believes that all meditations lead to the same goal, MR still insists that there is a firm contrast between Buddha Dharma and Hindu Dharma. The highest goal of Hindumargis is swarga; for Buddhamārgis the goal is Nirvana, the attainment of which is much more difficult.



### Bhima Ratna

When Bhima Ratna was a youth, he wanted to study in school in order to pursue his interest in music and religion. But his father said that as the oldest son he had to carry on the family grain business, and so this is the calling Bhima Ratna has followed

throughout his 66 years.<sup>1</sup> Throughout his life, Bhima Ratna (hereafter BR) has done many bratas and tīrtha Jātrās. About 15 years ago he visited different bahās and other religious centers around the Kathmandu Valley in a two year program led by Badri Vajrācārya; for this, Badri told stories from the Newar tradition about each place. From this, BR says, he learned most of what he knows of his tradition. BR is one of the regulars in the Guṇlā Bājan and one of the best musicians. He has also worked hard to maintain his family's activity in seven other guṭhis.

BR does his Nikhan daily and has not taken Dekka. He is not interested in the latter and says: "It is too expensive to take and the Vajrācāryas know too little. I am content without it." In spite of this disinterest in Dekka and a resigned sense of dissatisfaction with the Vajrācāryas ("In my youth they were as good as the lamas; now they are not."), BR has made Buddhist teachings and other details of religious life his lifelong hobby and reads many of the books published by Vajrācārya pandits and Theravādin authors. He always has his ears open for religious programs happening in town, be it a Theravāda event, Badri's school for Vajrācārya boys, or a Tibetan ceremony. BR can recite long devotional stotras from memory and identify many deities using the iconographic verses. He knows the directional Buddhas, their consorts, and is especially devoted to the goddess Annapurna.

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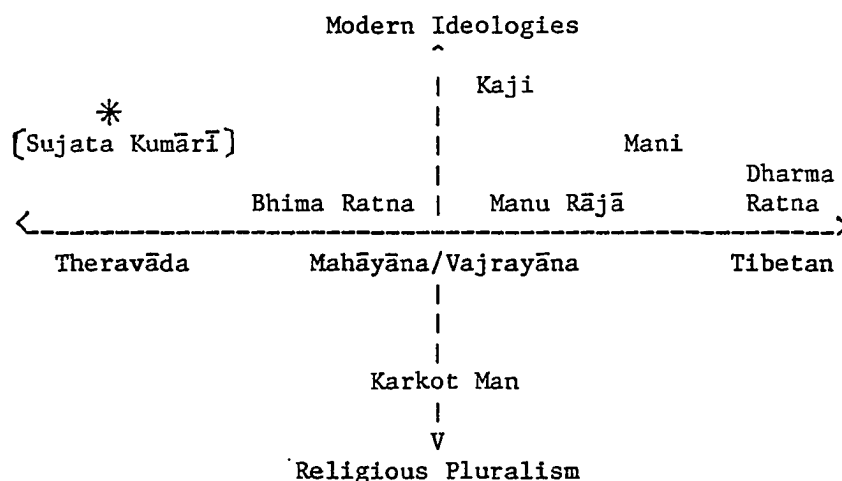
<sup>1</sup>His younger brother was granted this freedom and became a successful engineer who studied abroad and attained a high position in government work; he has lived outside of the family house for the last 20 years.



BR maintains the traditional ties to Newar Vajrayāna rituals and guṭhis, but these have not satisfied him. Although he sometimes attends Tibetan and Vajrācārya programs, BR now leans heavily toward the Theravādin movement. From childhood onward, he attended the earliest programs at Anandakuti. Having read many of their publications and attended many sermons by the bhikṣus, BR's intellectual understanding of Buddhist teachings has been derived largely from them.

Perhaps BR would say that describing him as a follower of the Theravādins is too strong. He emphasizes the continuities between the different Buddhist traditions, noting that karma is the chief factor involved in religious life and that whatever program of meditation is followed, the goal is the same. He hesitates to take a final position on devotion to any one approach, a relativism that he, unlike Karkot Man (below), will not extend to Hindu Dharma. Still, he does point out several differences between Vajrayāna and Theravāda Buddhism that are important to him. They reveal a viewpoint that comes from the Theravādin critique of Vajrayāna Buddhism: Mahāyāna Buddhism leads laymen to seek rebirth in Sukhāvatī whereas the Theravādins teach that Nirvāṇa is possible in this lifetime. His second criticism is that the Vajrayānists emphasize worshipping deities far too much: "Buddha Dharma should be first of all concerned with improving an individual's mind and karma, centered in meditation and not with worshipping deities."

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### Sujata Kumārī

For the past 10 years, Sujata Kumārī (hereafter SK) has been one of the most active young women who organize and orchestrate Dharmakirti Vihāra activities. Although she was married several years ago (at 25) and moved into her husband's house, SK continues to enjoy the freedom of a full-time job in a government institute. With an M.A. and a distinguished record of achievement, she is one of the top young women in the ranks of government service in Nepal.

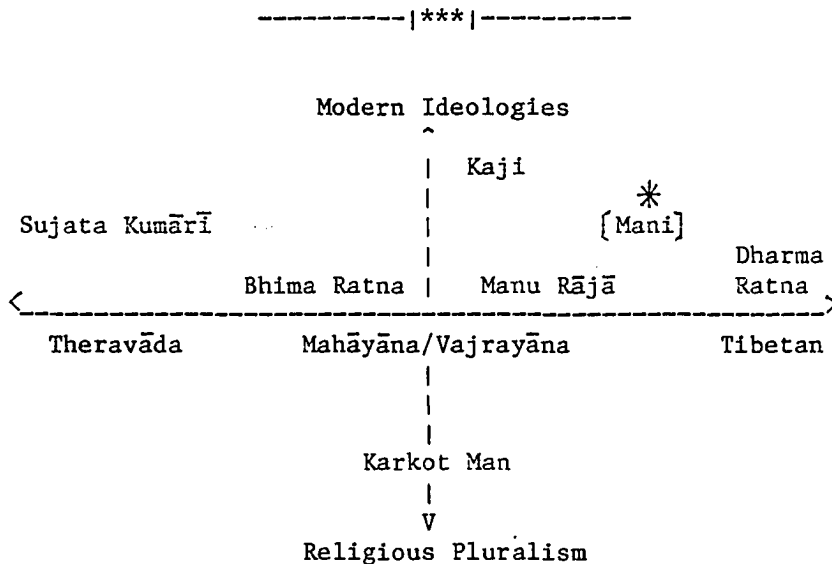
From early childhood, SK was interested in Buddhism. As a young woman in her religiously active natal home, she spent many mornings preparing the elaborate pūjā ba: that are part of most Vajrayāna pūjās. After years of questioning elders and getting explanations that never satisfied her intellectual curiosity, SK had come, by her early teens, to dismiss Vajrayāna tradition as superstition and being a devotee as submission to blind faith.

After she began going to Dharmakirti, she was pleased to find a

of clear information on Buddhist philosophy. She very soon attended lectures, joined study groups, began reading Theravādin literature, and became a close friend of Dhammavati and the Burmese Mahāguṇa. With several friends, she eventually went on religious retreats to remote Theravāda monasteries that emphasized Vipassanā meditation and study.

To SK, the Theravāda claim to being "pure Buddhism" is a powerful truth. Its deemphasis on ritual, the straightforward analysis of life and attachment, and the compatability she sees between modern ideas and doctrine all satisfy her educated sensibilities.

Recently, Sujata has come to suspect that her dismissal of the Vajrayāna was premature. With the doctrinal framework of the Theravāda tradition as a starting point, she has become curious about Vajrayāna teachings and has begun reading some western authors on these matters.



## Mani

Mani does not like the Theravāda movement because its leaders, he says, are really out to destroy older Newar culture. Unlike his father, who is a fairly regular supporter, Mani derides the bhikṣus as pale imitations of the classical ideal. Instead of begging for their alms, says Mani, they live very comfortable lives surrounded by material comfort. Moreover, they are quarrelsome, proud, and a few of the leaders morally suspect.

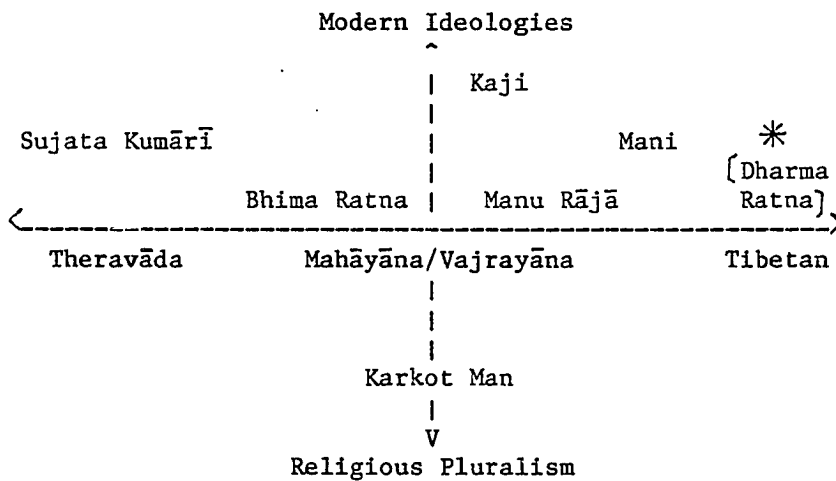
Although he is only 35, Mani recalls their especially beloved (now deceased) former Vajrācārya guruju Śuklānanda. Śuklānanda could teach with clarity, imbue the rituals with special meaning, and above all else, was devoted to living according to Buddha Dharma. Mani also criticizes the modern Vajrācāryas severely, but knows that their fallen status does not mean that the Vajrayāna tradition is similarly degraded.

Mani runs a new and successful shop selling clothes and cottage industry products to tourists. He is well-read and aware of the many "new winds of change" from the outside world. Dissatisfied with all of the religious movements around him, he constructs his own religious views from many sources. The gods, he says, are all just manifestations of one superior dya. They are merely incarnations who act as "policemen" of the world and enforce the karmic destiny of individuals. They are all inferior to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas whose actions can also affect human life.

On certain days, Mani is still sceptical of all of these old philosophical concepts. As he once said to me: "You tell me who ever came back from the dead to verify these teachings. All of these

teachings are only ideas constructed by men. It may all just be stories, for we cannot really know for sure if they are true." Ultimately, however, he sides with his tradition: "Or else why would past generations have developed all of these ideas and the elaborate pujas ? There must be something to them."

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### Dharma Ratna

Dharma Ratna (hereafter DR) has been a master carpenter most of his 55 years, an occupation not very common among the Tuladhars. From his youth, DR was drawn by an interest in Buddha Dharma: very early he participated in traditional observances such as a year-long dalan danegu brata and the Guṇlā Bājan. (He is now one of Asan's finest musicians.) However, only when he took an initiation from a Tibetan lama at 15 (into the worship-meditation on Amoghapāsa Lokeśvara) did his doctrinal understanding begin to mature. Soon after this

experience, he studied the Nāmasangīti text with a local Vajrācārya pandit and began to read other philosophically oriented works. By the time he was thirty, DR had taken another initiation, to Apāramitā (Amitābha), given by another Tibetan lama living in Patan. He has worshipped and meditated according to these initiations every day since.

Throughout his life, DR has studied Buddhist texts. He can quote from the ŚataSahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā and discuss the concept of śūnyatā in the style of a learned pandit. On his own, he learned the guru maṇḍala pūjā and can chant all of the mantras from it; he also knows the dhāranīs of many deities. He can explain the philosophical foundations of all of the major Vajrayāna rituals and written his own commentaries on what he has learned over the years, a collection which now runs to over 1,000 pages in three volumes. I am sure that in other circumstances (e.g. in Tibet), DR would have become a monastic teacher of the highest caliber.

DR criticizes the Theravādins from the classical standpoint of the Mahāyāna: the bhikshus are just śrāvakas; they don't know śūnyatā; their teachings are not sufficient to lead the way to Nirvāṇa. Sākyamuni Buddha, he says, taught less public doctrines and the śrāvakas have only the most simple, least developed of his teachings.

About fifteen years ago, DR began studying informally with one of the old Vajrācārya master, Jog Muni. Although he did not take a Dekka initiation --something he would like to do but cannot afford-- he did study the philosophical/meditative principles of advanced Vajrayāna practice. There are very few other Vajrācāryas that DR

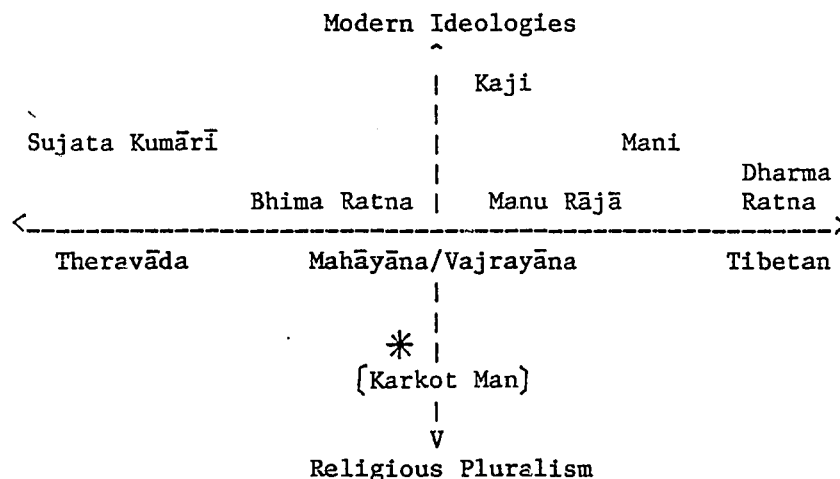
respects as he invariably falls into disputes with his family guruju because of the latter's sloppiness in ritual performance and his ignorance of Vajrayāna doctrine.

The essence of Buddha Dharma, says DR, is found through meditation that leads to the realization of śūnyatā. For this, dīkṣā and śikṣā ("initiation and teachings") are necessary. Buddhist ethics, he says, are founded on the realization that all beings are related to us and should be treated as our mothers and fathers. DR sees the western world as a morally bankrupt realm in which people become cruder and less capable of cultivating insight. "Despite all of the material comforts, your country moves further away from śānti (inner peace). And so, when our children here learn English, they lose their inclination toward Dharma."

DR is bitterly critical of his own society and especially the rich Tuladhars who claim that they no longer have the free time to observe the old traditions and meditate. "They waste the rare opportunity of their birth status. They will be reborn again in low castes or worse," he says. DR is likewise embittered about the turn away from Buddha Dharma he sees everywhere in Asan. "Here, in our society, our wealth was Dharma and now it is being thrown in the rubbish bin." On the finer points of Mahāyāna philosophy or Vajrayāna practice, he says, "There is really no one left for me to talk to."

When I was leaving Nepal, DR was very ill with advancing diabetes. He told me that his main concern in life now was to prepare for dying, explaining, "If I can maintain, undistracted, my concentration in śūnyatā and hold steadfast to my mantra at death, then I will not be reborn."

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#### Karkot Man

Karkot Man (hereafter KM) was one of the most loved men in Asan Tol. When he died of cancer in 1980, at the age of 56, the Tuladhar community in Asan was deeply shaken. KM represents the most complicated type of modern Buddhist laymen, embracing a diverse range of beliefs and doing so with a distinctly modern attitude.

In the mid-1940s, KM's father started up the first modern optical business in Kathmandu, a trade his son excelled at and which provided a lucrative income for his family. This family is also known for its musical talents dating from the time when his father organized and directed dramatic musical performances for the Ranas. All of his sons learned the different musical traditions that he imported for this endeavor, mostly from Calcutta. Thus, KM learned dance, drama, and singing, but violin was the interest that he pursued throughout his life. Although he taught himself using English language books on classical western technique, KM became a master at Indian devotional



style playing. KM was known and loved for showing no egotistic pride in this talent; he would play for anyone and did not insist on special circumstances or payment.<sup>1</sup>

KM's religious biography begins in Benares, where was sent for a year to complete his SLC (high school) diploma. After returning from there, his family noted the change in him toward spiritual matters. Soon after his return, he met Śivapuribāba, a sannyāsin who had gained a considerable Newar following and who organized a small asram near Paśupati.<sup>2</sup> Until this bābā's death in 1965, (at the age, say his devotees, of 136) KM visited him as frequently as possible, studied his teachings, and made donations. Śivapuribāba taught a version of Vedantic Hinduism that values all religious traditions, east and west, as partial revelations of ultimate truth. He also taught vegetarianism, a practice KM followed the rest of his life. This attachment to Śivapuribāba did not lead KM to limit the breadth of his religious activity. He patronized most of the religious movements in Kathmandu and was always doing something "for Dharma." Karkot Man was renowned by his friends (and scolded by his family) for his seemingly limitless energy in these matters. At home, KM insisted that his own family adhere to their Buddhist traditions: he was active in the Guṇlā Bājan, had all of his children take the Nikhan initiation, and gave special attention to the Vajrācāryas' ritual performances. He was never interested in Dekka, however. KM was also one of the Tuladhar

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<sup>1</sup>For over 20 years, he played for Radio Nepal and was decorated by the King as his country's finest violinist.

<sup>2</sup>This teacher also gained the interest of westerners who have written on his life (Singh 1974 ; Bennet 1976).

introducing a modern system of building rental that raised money for the group.

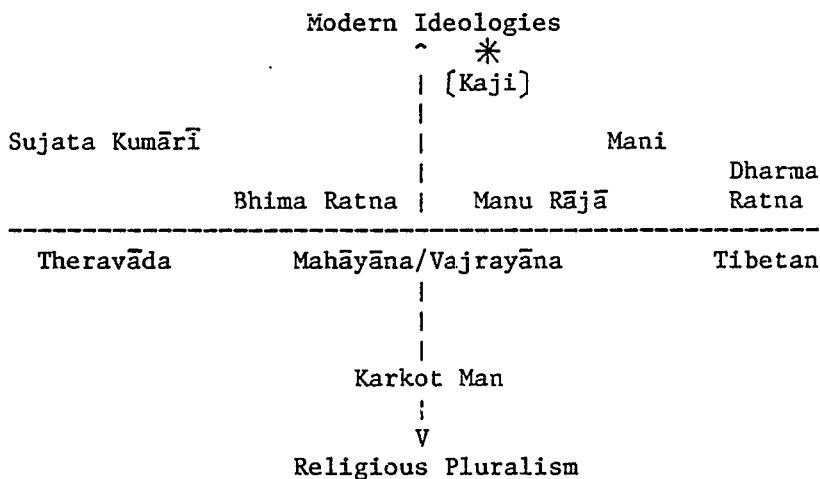
KM was also very active in the Theravādin movement. He supported the Anandakuti Vihāra from its earliest days and was a leader in introducing Tuladhars to Theravādin activities. The Śrī Lankan bhikṣu Narada Thera, who visited Nepal intermittently after those fateful days of Rana persecution in 1945, was another influential figure throughout KM's life. Right before his death, KM made a pilgrimage to Burma and Thailand with a Theravādin group. Despite this involvement, KM would not abandon Śivapuribāba's "Vedantic" position or concede his ultimate religious identity was Theravadin. He was not impressed by the local bhikṣus, but he still supported them. As he said, "They are not enlightened, but they must be respected for they are the mouthpiece for spreading Buddha Dharma at this time."

Unlike many of his Tuladhar contemporaries who make invidious comparisons between the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, KM argued for admitting the spiritual vitality of the Hindu path. He would always insist to the Theravādins and to Mahāyāna adherents that they had not grasped the spirituaity of Hindu Dharma. He constantly made donations to sanyāsins who would stop in his shop and even offered them lodging in his house. His ties to India also remained strong over the years. In 1973, he traveled all over India for six months on a pilgrimage arranged around religious sites. Living simply, he played his violin for lodging and traveled with sādhus. KM also subscribed to various Vedantin publications and disseminated them to friends, avidly read the works of the teacher Rajneesh, imported āyurvedic medicines, and

was an avid fan of Indian cinema. Just as some Tuladhars were cultural middlemen for Tibetan traditions, KM linked his community with the religious movements of modern India.

Given this vast range of interests and activities, and his love for his own traditional Buddhism, he still did not follow any one Dharma. As he said, "My Dharma is not from any one tradition."

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### Kaji Vajrācārya<sup>1</sup>

From childhood onward, Kaji's life has been unusual. His mother was mentally disturbed and died when Kaji was 10 and his father was not able to support his family adequately. After the latter was struck by typhoid, at nineteen Kaji had to take on the responsibility for family subsistence himself. He did not attend school and throughout his life he has tried his hand at many money-making

<sup>1</sup>We have included Kaji Vajrācārya in this account because he is an especially important figure among the Asan Tuladhars and because his life history is an exemplary case study in tradition and modernity.

schemes: sewing cloth shoes, making chupples and kites, selling used military clothing, and book selling. Only the latter proved workable and until recently the family barely scraped by, often with the help of generous friends.

As a youth, Kaji became involved in Newar political protests against the Government's dissolution of parliamentary democracy in 1961. This led Kaji into circles interested in communist teachings so that he began reading (a skill he taught himself) the writings of Marx, Mao, and Lenin (from books translated into Nepali). When Kaji's father was delirious with typhoid fever at this time and claimed to be possessed by various gods, Kaji did not believe it. Today Kaji recalls how his philosophical outlook crystalized at that time: "I realized that anything I cannot see with my eyes and verify I would not believe in. From this year I refused to bow to any image and refused to do pūjās, something I haven't done to this day (1982)." This "conversion" followed several years of active interest that touched upon the Bahai faith, and later, Christianity, both of which had been introduced into Asan through a few Newar friends (with ties to Darjeeling.) He ultimately rejected both and chose politics.

In 1965, when the Government banned Newari language radio broadcasts, Kaji became a leader who organized groups to protest this policy. He made speeches all over the Kathmandu Valley and made friends in many circles. He also started a bookstall in the small resthouse outside the entrance to Dagu Bahā, where he lives.

Kaji still maintains this business. The majority of his inventory of over 500 publications is in Newari, but he also carries Chinese, Russian, Korean, and Cuban selections. Kaji's resthouse bookstall is

one of the landmarks in Asan Tol and a chief center for Newar intellectuals of Kathmandu so that hundreds of people stop in for a chat every day. It is the place to glean the latest news and find out what is really happening. In addition to his being a source of up-to-date information, Kaji also lends a sympathetic ear to many problems. During the unrest that swept Nepal in 1979 and after the reforms that expanded the democratic participation in elections during 1980 and 1981, Kaji's stall once again became an active center of political organizing and campaigning.

Kaji's religious views are founded on his commitment to positivism and modern science. He likes to look for rational interpretations to what he considers ostensibly unfounded beliefs. For example, he says that, "All of the dya, all 33 lakhs of them, exist nowhere else but in the body." Kaji does believe in karmic retribution and says that the ātman is a psychological assumption necessary to explain the fact of consciousness and the operation of karma. He remains agnostic on the question of rebirth.

Ethics and social justice in modern Nepal, he feels, must start by rejecting the hierarchy and discrimination of the caste system. Kaji wants Newars to modernize their ideas and improve their material state. He is the dominant person in Dagu Bahā, not as a religious leader, but as a proponent of modern standards of hygiene and in calling upon all families, rich and poor, to participate in the yearly round of activities that are part of their cultural endowment.

Despite his rejection of traditional belief and in seeming contradiction to his personal stance refusing to take up his role as a priest, Kaji is fervent in his love of Newar tradition and in his

efforts to preserve Newar language and culture. In 1981, for example, he organized and assisted on the work that completely restored the Dagu Bahā kwāpā dya shrine. His identity as a Newar is very important to him and he speaks often about the task of not losing the things that make Newar culture unique and great. Kaji resolves his religious agnosticism, activism, and Marxism through his notion of the Bodhisattva: "In these times, the good communist is the greatest bodhisattva."

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Summary:  
PATTERNS OF CHANGING BUDDHIST BELIEF AMONG THE ASAN TULADHARS

In this chapter, we have presented an overview of the patterns of belief in the contemporary Tuladhar community. We have noted that even with the loss of many traditions, the Tuladhars have been most reluctant to stop calling the Vajrācāryas to perform their household rituals. This conservatism has kept the Vajrācāryas as a dominant group in this realm, but it has not stemmed the inflow of alternatives to their Vajrayāna-centered buddhist belief.

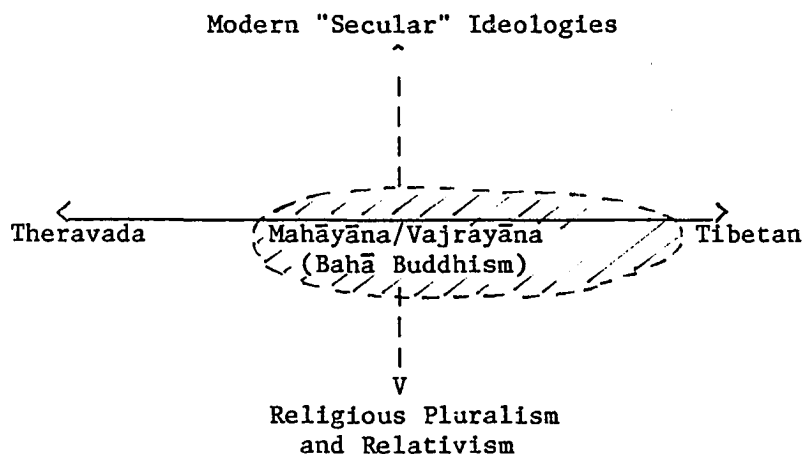
There has been the clear lessening of the doctrinal base of the Bahā Buddhist tradition in Asan Tol. Competition from the reformist Theravādins has drawn many toward its viewpoints, a tendency that the increased Tibetan presence has resisted only somewhat. Only a very small minority of Tuladhars know anything about the "higher teachings" of Vajrayāna Buddhism. This is reflected by the lack of comprehension of the most basic and common symbols surviving from earlier periods. This is clearly attributable to the inescapable consequence of the Vajrācāryas lack of learning and since only five percent of the

Tuladhars have taken the Dekka initiation. Thus, the elders have lost contact with the "higher" teachings that are at the center of the Bahā Buddhist tradition.

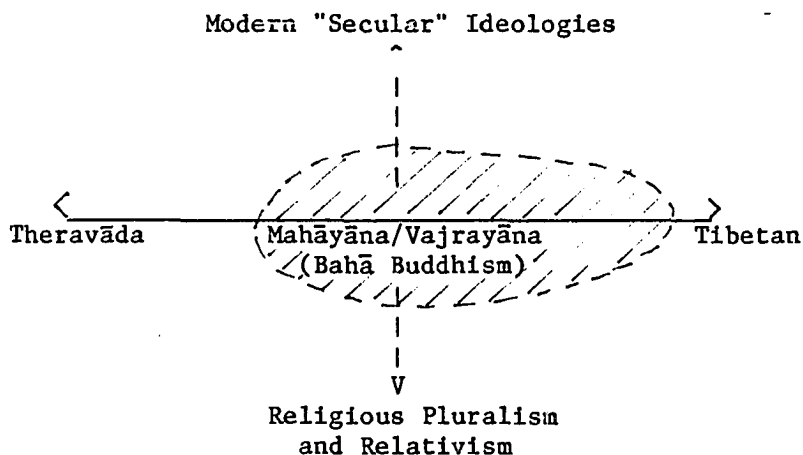
To conclude this section, we can give a graphic portrait of the changes in belief over the past two hundred years. We contrast the late Bahā Buddhist situation with the structure of belief in 1750, 1900, 1960, and in the present time.

Figure X-2: Configurations of Buddhist Belief- The Past 200 Years:

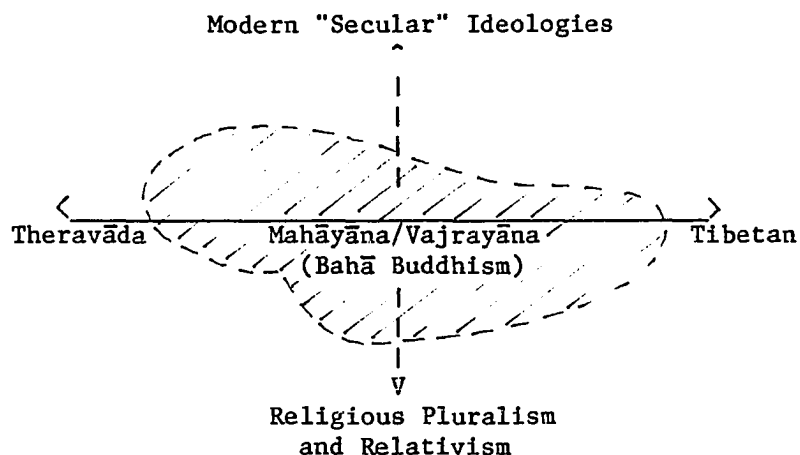
1750:



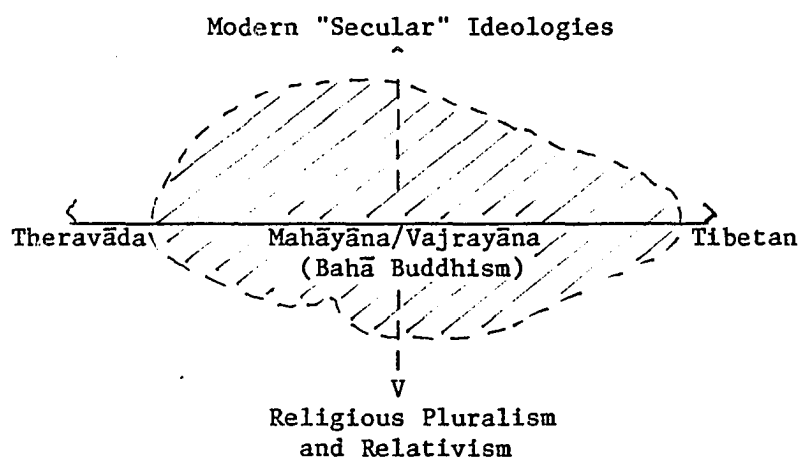
1900:



1960:



1982



This weakened ideological center has made it easier for newly imported ideologies -- Buddhist, Hindu, and others -- to gain Tuladhar followers in Asan Tol. The cultural forces at work are slowly edging out the Vajrayāna-dominated tradition, but not a sense of Buddhist identity, from the collective consciousness of the Tuladhar community.



CHAPTER XI:  
Nhugu Phai: The "New Winds" of Modern Change

The socio-political forces at work in Nepal over the last one hundred years have shaken the foundations, earthquake-like, of the older order of Newar tradition. As Bellah has pointed out, the modernization of traditional societies cannot be treated as a unitary process (Bellah 1970: 159). In Asan Tol, change is taking place at every level of life, affecting institutions and individuals across a vast, interrelated continuum. In treating this complex phenomenon, we follow the order of presentation in this study to describe modern change in two domains: in the socio-cultural system of Bahā Buddhism and from the perspective of the Tuladhar individuals. We also discuss the ongoing attempts to restore and revive Newar Vajrayāna tradition.

Political History and Its Impact

The modern era in Nepal should be dated from 1846, when Rana rule commenced. Despite its conscious policy of excluding foreigners, Rana Nepal was clearly influenced by the changes that were also affecting British India. This most recent wave of Hindu revival in Nepal was related to the conservative cultural movements in India that coalesced in response to British rule. There was renewed emphasis on the Nepalese king as avatār and on Śiva-Paśupati as the national deity; also, vigorous patronage was extended to Hindu shrines.

It is not possible to separate "modernization" from Rana era policies of conscious Hinduization in Nepalese society (Rose 1971). The Ranas and their allies were also leaders in Westernization. The

best example of this was their wholesale importation of Italian architects and artists to build Rana palaces all across the Kathmandu Valley. Rana families also introduced many items of western technology (Wright 1958: 77) and they were likewise active in importing Indian literature, music, and drama, chiefly through Calcutta, which was their main avenue of contact with the outside world. Although these innovations were brought to the Valley largely for the Ranas' own enjoyment, the wealthy classes-- Chetris and Newars-- usually followed their lead in acquiring Rana interests and tastes. These widening connections also meant that the opposition to Rana rule waxed as British power waned in India (Rose 1970: 25).

For the Newars, losing political autonomy meant a loss of cultural center. In the Valley, the Ranas continued to confiscate lands so that, deprived of their former chief means of support, many bahā institutions and guṭhis were hard-pressed to continue: this era marks a time of major deterioration in Bahā Buddhist culture. The Ranas had no interest in protecting the older Newar order. Unlike the Malla kings who gave dāna to the Vajrācārya sangha, Rana policy was openly hostile and there was no question of patronage. Thus, land holdings were lost, Newari became a persecuted language, laws were passed to limit cultural observances, and Kathmandu's palace became a different ceremonial center changed to reflect Hindu innovations and renovations.

The vigorous Brahmanical character of Rana rule was further accentuated by their legal system, which was based on caste-defined codes favoring the upper Hindu groups. And today, the modern

judicial and governmental policies in tax collection strongly affect Newar society. The courts were (and are) viewed more as bidding forums for purchasing a decision rather than as impartial tribunals dispensing justice. "To enter the court," said one Tuladhar, "guarantees only one thing: throwing away lots of money." Regardless of the accuracy of the Newars' perception, the merchant assessment of the situation has led to their giving up many guthi lands to their former tenants knowing that the courts will not be helpful in securing the rightful rent payment or removing renegade tenants from their lands.

Because the methods of income tax assessment are chaotic and venal, all who do business in Kathmandu seek to minimize their payment. One now seeks "to look poorer" than one really is; thus, the exteriors of Tuladhar homes are not rebuilt according to the older tradition's styles, i.e. with elaborately carved windows and frescoes. This has hastened the transition of the market's architectural environment into styles that are Indian in appearance and not distinctively Newar. These factors have pushed the rich to effectively opt out of their classical role as exemplars and patrons of classical tradition, contributing instead to the process of individual withdrawal we will return to below.

Ultimately, these changes that began in Rana times must be viewed as a consequence of the economic democratization of the Nepalese polity. Land reform, de jure and de facto, has continued the process of broadening the base of landholding in the Kathmandu Valley. The Newar traditions that were founded on the feudalistic social order of Malla times have been slowly undermined as a result. This society was

forced to change in adapting to the policies of a new political elite.

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### Religious Geography

The internal order of Newar house, courtyard, neighborhood, city, and Valley -- ideally integrated externally with pilgrimage excursions and internally through Dekka meditations -- has a maṇḍala structure that orders and centers Newar life in many domains. That this "cultural environment" has a strong role in conditioning an individual's experience in cities has been well demonstrated by the fields of proxemics (Hall 1966) and ecological psychology (Barker 1968; Milgram 1970).

The impact of modern change on the Buddhist landscape has been strong. The Rana confiscations have meant that the bahās and temples have not had the resources to restore their physical structures. In contrast, over the past two hundred years the great Hindu shrines in the Valley (Paśupati, Buda Nilakantha, Dakṣiṇ Kālī) have been revived and consistently well-endowed, so that the competing Hindu order in the religious geography has been well elaborated and celebrated. These shrines have also benefitted from the support of the recent, mostly Hindu immigrants.

The Buddhist merchants who prospered under Rana rule were also lavish patrons of their tradition. Their efforts partially resisted the decline of Bahā Buddhism: they helped to restore Svayambhū and Si Gha: and built many chaityas, but this was not enough. Even at Svayambhū, we documented many lost traditions in festival performances and physical maintenance. The bahās have suffered the most, as it is

hard to find evidence of any even minor restorations over the past century.

Maintenance of the religious buildings of Valley requires regular rebuilding due to the monsoon rains and because of the periodic severe earthquakes that damage a large percentage of Valley buildings. Major quakes occurred in 1808, 1833 and 1934<sup>1</sup>, all after the end of Malla rule. This need to rebuild, coupled with the decline in resources to rebuild with, has been especially debilitating for the older Bahā Buddhist traditions.

In Asan Tol, the declining physical presence of Buddhism is clear. Over the past 200 years, two bahās (i.e. 25% of the those from Malla times) have completely disappeared-- building, cult, and sangha. Even those that survived the quake and natural decline have lost their older forms as simple cement and other cruder, more "modern" designs have been introduced. The Bahā Buddhist layout still lives on in fragments, but the culturally distinct and older Newar architectural sense has been fractured. The same process is also well underway with the private homes in Asan Tol, where bricks, clay roofing tiles and carved wooden trim have given way to cement, corrugated sheeting, and unadorned iron. Newars have introduced non-traditional construction media for pragmatic reasons and to express their wealth.<sup>2</sup> Although this is a surface change in Asan's appearance, this experiential

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<sup>1</sup>The last severely damaged over 50% of Kathmandu's temples and houses (Rana 1935).

<sup>2</sup>To rebuild in the "traditional style is to adopt centuries old technology: mud mortar, clay roof tiles that are troublesome to maintain, and windows that don't seal out the winter chill.

domain strongly conditions the individual in the urban environment, as modern architectural theorists point out. Newly built Newar architecture in Asan Tol no longer achieves the traditional aesthetic and has hastened the Indianization of the old city.

The horizontal and vertical structures of spatial order have also been distorted. The old town walls formerly set up protective boundaries and defined social lines that rested upon religious understandings. These have been almost fully uprooted in Kathmandu, as only a few festival processions mark the older boundaries. Moreover, former Asan residents have moved out of the old market and new migrants have occupied dwellings built on the paddy fields that once ringed the town. The out-migrants have thus diverted their resources outside of the downtown and the new migrants have only marginally entered the cultural life of Asan Tol.

The traditional architecture also preserved a sense of vertical hierarchy, with certain temples occupying the highest standing above domestic buildings in town. For all Kathmandu, this was the Talegu temple in the Palace, and in Asan Tol it was the temple roof of Annapurna. Forty years ago, Newars in Asan first broke this convention and most in the neighborhood have since done so. This is a telling symbol of and simulacrum for the complex forces (population increases, new building media, etc.) that press the individuals away from conformity to older traditions.

We have noted the cultural conservatism that has largely prevented individuals from uprooting existing shrines. Although many temples slowly decay and go unused, the ancient order of shrines has not been widely overturned. This hesitancy to tamper with religious

shrines has slowed the decline of older religious traditions. It has been differential patronage that has led to the strongly Hindu sense of religious order being best preserved.

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Road building and access to cheap transportation have also changed the older patterns of involvement within the Valley's religious field. The cults at the center must now compete with a wider grid of outlying shrines for gaining patronage. Again, the chief Buddhist shrines in and around Kathmandu have likely benefitted from this increased mobility, but the smaller urban shrines have not felt this impact. The fact that most bahās in town have lost their character as active Buddhist shrines has meant that they are not visited -- or patronized -- by Newar or Tibetan laymen.

In urban Kathmandu, the effect of modern change has been both extreme deterioration and distinctive efforts at revival. Just as we may conclude that the architectural aesthetic and local institutions in urban Kathmandu have changed in recent times, we must also note that in Asan Tol, it is also here that activists have been formulating institutional responses to decline. Thus, Asan has lost 25% of its bahās, but it has also seen the growth of a new Vajrācārya training school (described below). It remains to be seen how effective these revivalist movements will be in developing a new cultural center in the face of physical changes that continue to undermine a distinctly Newar cultural environment.

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### Economic Changes

Over the course of this century, the Asan Tol market has changed dramatically. By the turn of the century, Kathmandu was increasingly linked to Indian economic networks as expanded transport up to the Nepalese border (especially by rail) made trade easier. Until the road linkages with India made Kathmandu an outpost for cheap Indian products, the Asan market was primarily a center where middlemen traded in essential local products: rice, ghee, grains, and locally manufactured goods. Tuladhars still dominate the trade in these fields, but, like modern middlemen elsewhere, they have had to expand into retail trade in products from distant centers such as India, China, and Hong Kong (Mintz 1959: 23). In addition, with the improved transportation around the Valley, the wholesale trade in rice has also been increasingly dominated more by village-based middleman (Ishii 1978), and the dominance of the merchants of Asan Tol has ended.

Another important change within the Buddhist community was the end of the Lhasa trade with the Chinese annexation of Tibet in 1959. As we noted in Chapter IX, these traders, who made high profits there, were strong patrons of Newar Buddhism.

We have noted how outsiders have made recent inroads into the shop space of the market. By the turn of the century, Kathmandu was increasingly linked to Indian economic networks as expanded transport to the border (especially by rail) made trade easier, the dominant group being Marwaris. With an increasing number of retailers all doing business under similar circumstances, profit margins remain very low. This trend has also been accentuated by the growing presence of Indian street peddlers, mostly Biharis, who undercut the shopkeepers because



they have no rental costs. Some Newars have become hostile to these economic "squatters," while others have welcomed the reduced prices of the goods they sell. Overall, the Tuladhars feel that in recent times, they have had to work harder and longer, yet still earn less than they used to. Thus, the economic pressures have forced them to keep their shops open as much as possible.<sup>1</sup> The common Tuladhar perception is that modern life has led to a decrease in free time.

Asan Tol has experienced very little industrial development. Although a few shopkeepers have raised the capital to open sewing workshops, umbrella-assembly productions, and knitting manufacture, these have all remained on a very small scale. Many formerly local industries have declined (cotton weaving, bamboo product production, and metalwork) and have been replaced by cheaper Indian products. Thus, economic changes in Nepal and in Asan have worked to undermine overall Tuladhar dominance. Rising costs, changing opportunities, and newly discovered tastes have reshuffled the options in economic decision making. Modern change has "added on" materials, entertainments, and ideas that compete with the older traditions specifying dāna as the best choice for surplus cash. As a result, modern Tuladhars feel that they have less money to spend on "Dharma", i.e. religious endeavor.

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<sup>1</sup>The increase in Tuladhars splitting up joint families and shop space (see below) may contribute to the lack of surplus labor, thereby accentuating the problem.

### Social Organization

Although kin ties are still very important in Tuladhar social life, there is a clear trend toward the nuclearization of family units. It is now a widespread practice for brothers to divide the family property into separate households once the father dies. As a result, housing space has been pushed to its upward limits and personal space has decreased for many. Population has increased to the extent that brothers have moved out of the old city for lack of space in over 35 % of our sample households. Because of these tendencies, the elders have slipped considerably from their place at the center of family life. A child's predominant playmates are now less often his cousins, and the complex but fundamental enculturation process of children imitating and being taught by elders has been weakened. Family cults and guṭhi observances have also declined with the weakening of the extended family.

Intercaste service relationships, once basic to many Newar institutions, have also deteriorated seriously. We have noted that Jyāpu tenants once had an indispensable role to play in many Tuladhar household ceremonies. Having prospered due to land reform laws (Webster 1983) and in many cases having wrested land from their former Urāy landlords, Jyāpus have diverted resources that once sustained the old Tuladhar guṭhis and they have refused to function in their traditional role as servants.<sup>1</sup> The result has been that Tuladhar families have dispensed with many of the older traditions that they

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<sup>1</sup>Rising Jyāpu prosperity is clearly reflected in their cultural observances: in many cases the Jyāpu groups around Kathmandu preserve best the oldest Newar customs in music and festivals. The last Pañca Dān, for example, was sponsored by a Jyāpu family.

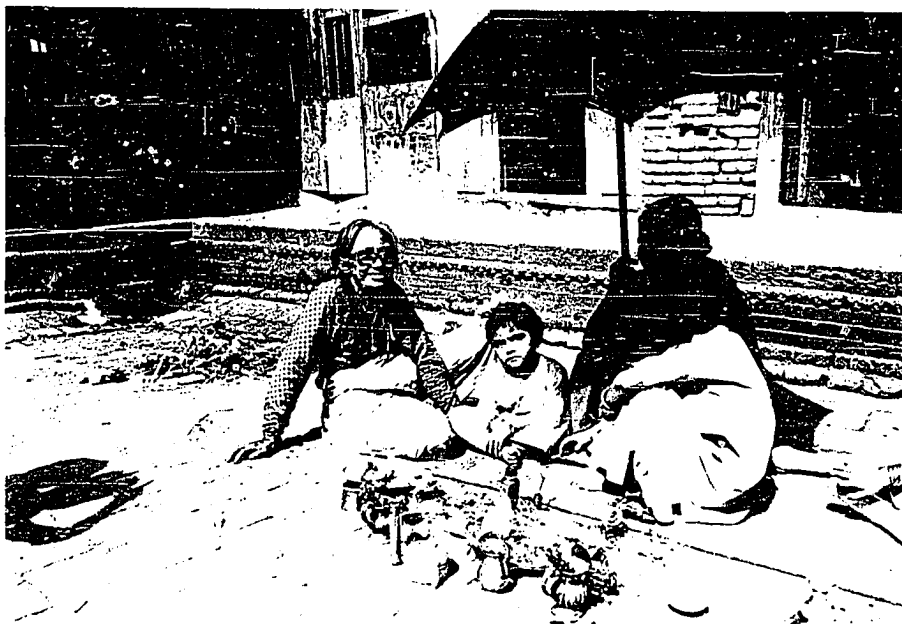
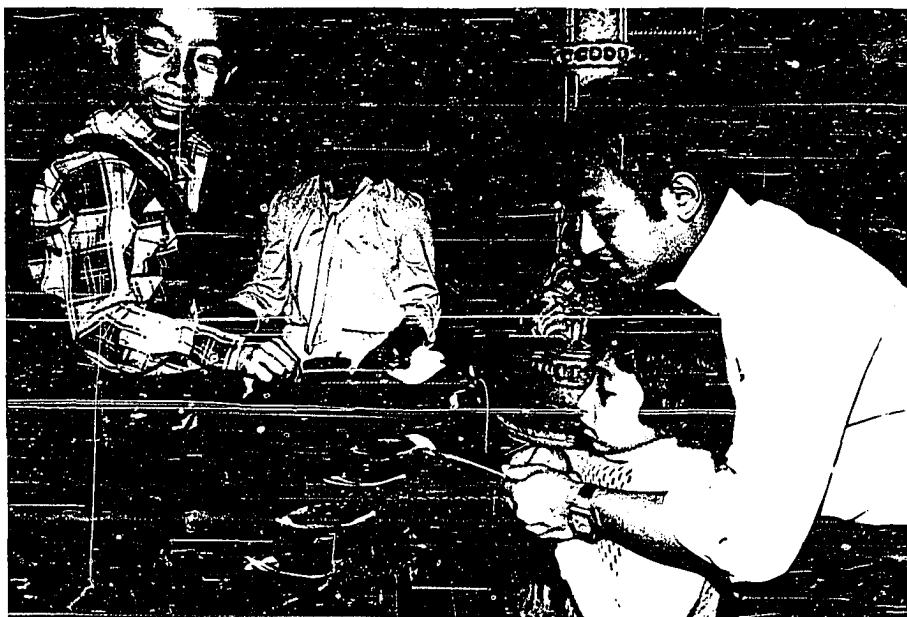


Plate 139 and 140: Cultural Transmission Within Families: Elders as Teachers



can no longer properly observe. Likewise, ties with Citrakar painters, as well as barbers, butchers, washermen, and untouchables have very often given way to other arrangements according to a cash labor economy. Just as Ishii has reported in his village, caste observances and ideology have remained, while the fabric of intercaste relationships has been widely abandoned (1978).

Special emphasis must be laid on the declining relationship between the Urāy and the Vajrācārya priests. The fifty-year dispute between these two groups destroyed the older jajmān system of Baha Buddhism that distributed Urāy clients among the lay community. This conflict started over Urāy devotion to a lama who came to Kathmandu in 1922 and made public lectures. The Tuladhars also used to eat ritually consecrated foods offered by this lama, an observance that violated Newar pollution and purity customs, but which is standard Tibetan practice. This prompted the Vajrācāryas to object-- both out of protest at this breach of ritual propriety and also out of jealousy (Rosser 1966). When the Urāy persisted, the Vajrācāryas claimed that they were no longer taking cooked rice or water from the jajmāns and this began a long chain of escalating conflict that led to boycott and bitterly contested court cases.

This disagreement also allowed other Urāy dissatisfactions to surface. The most notable was the practice of Vajrācāryas offering for sale to other Vajrācāryas the right to serve certain jajmāns. Some were even using the threat of trading a family's purohit rights to a guruju who was distant (and thereby inconvenient) in order to solicit increased Urāy donations. This practice had added to Urāy resentment.

These disputes made the Urāy lose considerable respect for their traditional gurujus. Given all of the other hardships under Rana rule, this fissioning of the most fundamental lay-sangha relationship inflicted a deep wound on the Bahā Buddhist tradition.

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### Ritual Life

As cultural performances, Vajrayāna rituals are highly evolved statements of Buddhist order and power. In our study, we found pervasive evidence that ritual traditions in the Tuladhar community have been drastically curtailed over recent decades. The decrease in Buddhist ritual is clearly a product of many factors: dissatisfaction with the Vajrācāryas, other avenues of excess wealth and entertainment, modern medicine, and positivistic ideologies critical of "superstition." Some Tuladhars regard their "lack of free time" as a hindrance to their practicing as their ancestors once did.

The classic life-cycle rites have also been attenuated. Although most Tuladhars still adhere to the samskāra observances, it is more due to the press of social opinion than to religious meaning of the rites.<sup>1</sup> We noted throughout our study of Newar ritual that the Buddhist meaning was veiled from Tuladhar awareness and that scepticism over these rites "really being Buddha Dharma" was widespread. Still, pollution and purity observances remain strongly embedded in the Urāy lifestyle, though there is less fastidiousness now than there was in the recent past. Given the weakness of the

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<sup>1</sup>It would be difficult to marry off a daughter if she had not done Ihi and Baran Cwanegu.

the Vajrayāna position, Brahmanical traditions (such as the svayamvara wedding rite) and Western customs (disco dancing at wedding feasts) have recently been readily accepted into the Tuladhar lifestyle.

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### Festivals

Besides setting the chronological order of yearly life, festivals are the time for stopping the normal flow of life as individuals spend time with kin, making devotional offerings, viewing displays or processions, and feasting. Jātrās are occasions for punya-making, seeking divine protection, and performances that provide aesthetic enjoyment. With the decline of many guṭhis that once channeled lay participation, the festivals of Kathmandu have declined in terms of their elaboration and popular participation. One key indicator of the diminished importance of festivals in Asan is the rarity of shops closing, even for short periods, on festival days, a trend the Tuladhars attribute to the press of economic competition.

The decline in the case of smaller festivals has been the most pronounced.<sup>1</sup> Some have disappeared altogether in central Asan Tol, while others merely pass through, being little more than another distraction in the busy marketplace. The major festivals in Asan still draw very large crowds, but older informants described how much more elaborate even these jātrās were in their youth.

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<sup>1</sup>The best example of the loss of focus on festival events in Asan Tol is Gai Jātrā. The market hardly closes down at all so that everyone's attention is not directed to the processions. By contrast, in Bhaktapur the market closes and nearly everyone lines the route to observe.

The magnificent display traditions in the Buddhist community during Guṇlā and Indra Jātrā have declined greatly. The reason for this is the thievery that is very much a product of modernity: connections that supply Western art markets.

Thus, Asan has declined as a ceremonial center due to the out-migration of families, the in-migration of non-Newar outsiders (who do not participate), and the breakdown of guṭhis that formerly underwrote cultural performances. The overall trend of declining interest in festivals supports our conclusion that modern change pushes individuals "inside", both physically and metaphorically, so that religion contracts to become a more of an individual-based phenomenon (cf. Luckmann 1967).

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#### The Decline of Bahā Buddhism and Attempts at Restoration

Because individuals pass away and physical structures inexorably decay, religious traditions are always faced with the task of ongoing reconstruction on every level (Berger 1969: 45). Certain resources maintain the structures that perpetuate religion in society. The contemporary state of Bahā Buddhism is a case study in a religious system's devolution.

Deprived of a landed income, the physical structures are in decline and the Vajrācārya sangha members have not been able to subsist solely in religious occupations. As a result, many in the younger generations have not become householder ācāryas in the classical sense but have fallen, at best, to the rank of "masters of

Plate 141: Modern Display Behind Locked Grates: Recent Attempts to Combat Thievery

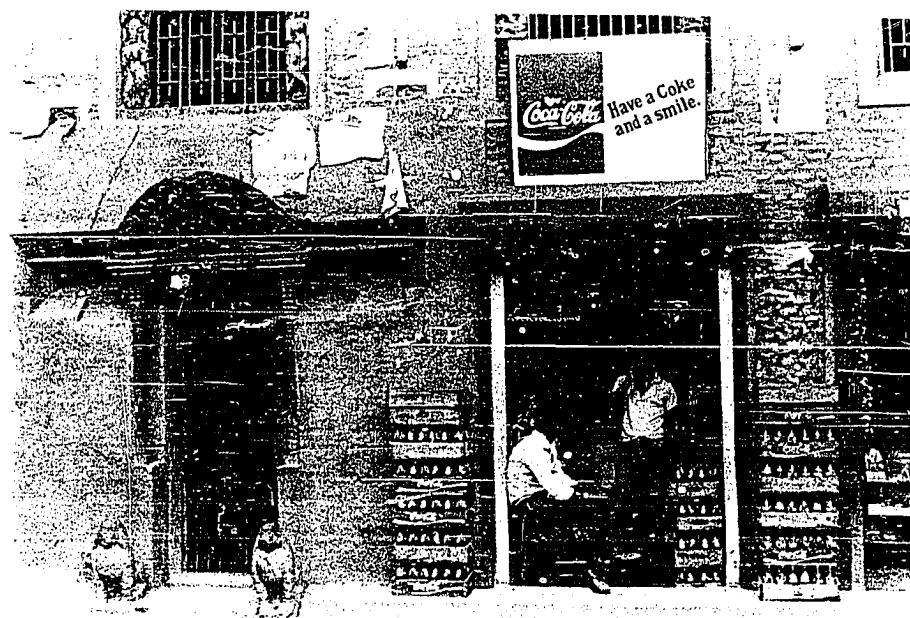
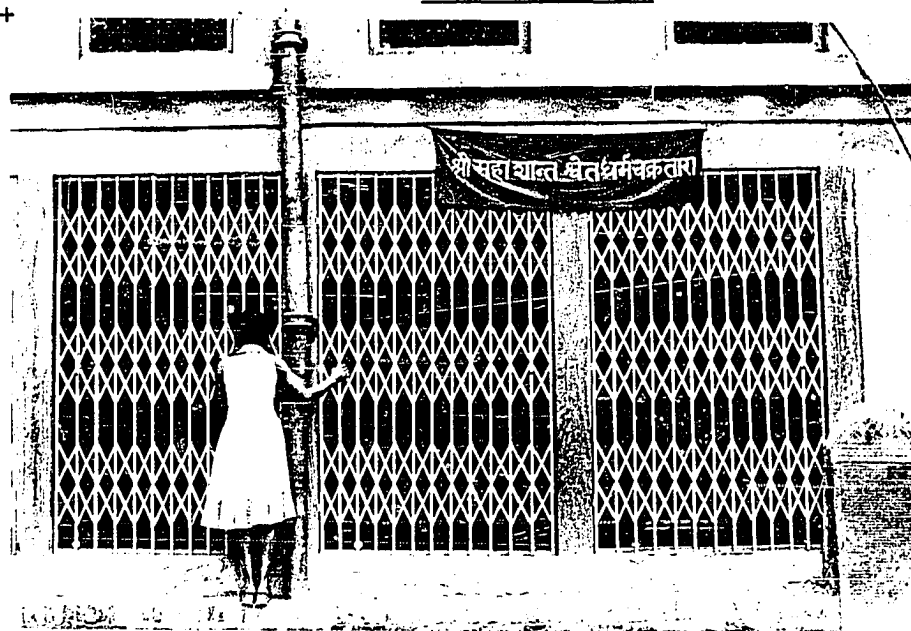


Plate 142: Old and New Cultural Media: Bahā Torāṇa, left, and the Establishment of a Multinational's Market



ceremony" who lack spiritual powers. The practice of purusaṇ cwanegu, the foundation of their Vajrayāna legitimacy, is now a rarity and the ranks of those who practice sādhana are very few. Similarly, their ignorance of Sanskrit and the texts of their own tradition has left them only marginally aware of the philosophical foundations of their inherited tradition. They still perform the rituals, but these are little more than outward performances. Overall, most contemporary Vajrācāryas are not capable fulfilling the task of transmitting the inner teachings or practices of Bahā Buddhist tradition.

These deficiencies have undermined the confidence of their former chief patrons, the Urāy. Their lack of learning has consequently meant that recent generations of Urāy have not been instructed on the meanings of the old traditions. Few now take Dekka, an initiation that formerly completed their awareness of the Vajrayāna world view that conditions almost every dimension of Newar Buddhism. At present, the upper tier of Bahā Buddhism is a very fragile awareness and the tradition as a whole is collapsing into simple devotional Mahayanism. Our surveys showing the lack of Tuladhar understanding of the bodhisattva ideal and of Vajrayāna symbolism attest to this failure to inculcate fundamental viewpoints. This deficiency, coupled with the legacy of the fifty-year dispute, has meant that the Urāy have been increasingly reluctant to give dāna to the Vajrācārya sangha. Deprived of their second major source of patronage, the Bahā Buddhist order has been weakened further as the dialectical process spins downward.

As we have seen, this process of disenchantment has been accelerated (in different ways) by the Theravādins and Tibetan lamas. Vajrācārya leadership of the Newar lay community in ritual,

initiation, festival performance, and intellectual life is clearly in decline.

There are also structural problems that have worked against the Vajrācārya sangha's renewal. First, the decline of the bahās as religious centers for Tuladhar laymen is another source of Bahā Buddhism's devolution: they are no longer the focus of regular donations or restorations.<sup>1</sup> Over the past one hundred years, most major Urāy patronage has been directed toward building chaityas in private courtyards, not to the bahās.

A second problem is that the sangha of each bahā is organized according to age seniority, not spiritual practice or standing. Those accorded the highest status and power are simply the oldest living members. As a result, younger Vajrācāryas -- who certainly understand modern Kathmandu more clearly than the seniormost members -- have little influence. This same situation obtains in the Kathmandu-wide Vajrācārya sangha. Long-standing factional disputes and jealousies have militated against organizing a united sangha's efforts to reorganize and adapt because the leading senior leaders have resisted any major attempts at reform that have threatened their standing. As a result, despite the fact that most Vajrācāryas are aware of the dire times facing their order, the Vajrācārya sangha has done little to reverse the decline.

A third hindrance is the inherent conservatism in the Vajrācārya

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<sup>1</sup>The clearest indicator of this is the decline in Bahā pūjā outings in which families visited all the town's bahās in a single day. Only those living on a bahā courtyard make regular offerings to the kwāpā dya. Each Tuladhar family has a traditional bahā at which srāddha offerings should be deposited, as we noted in Chapter III.

sangha. In its social institutions and as a legitimizing ideology, Bahā Buddhism was evolved in a society organized on caste lines and recognized caste as a barrier to the higher practices. By doing so, however, it abandoned ancient doctrinal teachings that instruct its masters to transcend caste as an ultimate phenomenal category. As Kathmandu has changed, the former Buddhist elite has been unwilling to discard the older prejudices. Locked into its caste-defined categories, the Vajrācāryas can do little to attract the patronage of nouveau riche lower caste groups, both Newar and non-Newar.<sup>1</sup>

However, this same conservatism has also worked to slow the decline. Newar Buddhists show a remarkable hesitancy to discard rites and rituals, even when they have little intellectual meaning and entail considerable costs, a quality the Urāy themselves often comment on. The preservation of so many religious monuments from Licchavi times is another reflection of this powerful respect for the past.

All these factors have meant that a great deal of the ancient cultural order still exists. As we saw in the last chapter, the Urāy ability to separate the present state of Buddhist tradition from the awareness of past cultural greatness has meant that the community still harbors a considerable reservoir of belief that has supported the various attempts at revival.

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<sup>1</sup>Several Vajrācāryas said to me that they would rather let the initiations die out than give them to a Jyāpu.

### Attempts at Revival

Efforts at reform and revival have had to come from outside the traditional Baha Buddhist institutions and have been the result of individual efforts. There are still a handful of Sanskrit pandits and meditation masters who have dedicated their lives to maintaining the old traditions. Since publishing in Newari was finally permitted after the Rana downfall (1950), these Vajrācāryas have published over six hundred different books and periodicals on ritual and philosophy (Takaoka 1981), a substantial effort. In addition, new programs of Mahāyāna storytelling have been introduced that have been widely attended. Their effect has been relatively minor, however, as the topics have almost always been the same as similiar Theravāda sessions: Jātaka and Avadāna tales.<sup>1</sup>

Another sign of revival has been the Mahāyāna Bicar Guṭhis, an organization founded in 1978 with the goal of propagating an awareness of Mahāyāna philosophy. However, as of 1982, the group had not produced any publication or met regularly.

Perhaps the most effective forms of cultural revival have been organized by literary groups such as the Nepal Bhāṣā Pariṣād. In recent years, this organization has sponsored special Buda Janko ceremonies for great senior writers, adapted festival days to collect funds for its institutions, and published extensively on the theme of

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<sup>1</sup>It is most striking that the Vajrācāryas have not drawn upon the Mahāyāna sūtras, which express the classical hierarchical statements of the latter tradition's superior standing. Similiarly, one searches in vain to find any instances in the early Theravāda-Vajrācārya debates of the latter referring to such sūtras as the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka for support of their positions. The only conclusion is that the awareness of these texts has faded greatly in the Vajrācārya community (Lewis 1981).

preserving Newar culture.

Another sign of revival has been in the Asan Tuladhar community's restoration of the Digu Dya shrines. Overcoming factional divisions between the Asan group and the Jhwā Bahā Tuladhars, the Digu Khya Saṃhiti succeeded in eliciting capital funds from the wealthiest members and establishing a rental building that should generate revenue that will pay for the preservation of the site and the yearly rites of this important cult. We noted in Chapter IV that establishing an interest income has been the chief characteristic of surviving guṭhis.

The most significant attempt at revival is that being made by a learned Vajrācārya named Badri Guraju. In 1977, he started a school for Vajrācārya young men to teach them the proper ritual forms, mantras, and literary traditions that are at the foundation of the Vajrācāryas' role in Newar tradition. These efforts have been supported by many Asan Urāy and Badri has a regular enrollment of over fifty students, aged 8 to 20, who come every school day after school for several hours of instruction. He has succeeded in having other elder Vajrācārya pandits participate in teaching endeavors including Sanskrit study. Curiously, Badri's teaching has not included a distinctly Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna philosophical grounding. The concept of the bodhisattva, for example, has not been emphasized even to his most advanced pupils. Badri's students have learned well, although it is not clear how they will lead in a revival of the Vajrācārya sangha or how they will avoid the same economic pressures that undermined their fathers' generation. Badri's firmest conviction is that his school is the beginning of a new generation of Vajrācārya masters who can again

Plate 143: Badri Guraju, Master Storyteller



inspire the respect of their jajmāns.

A key factor in the context of Vajrayāna revival in modern Kathmandu is the Buddhist pluralism that the Tibetan lamas and Theravādin bhikṣus represent. Both have become competitors with the Vajrācāryas in terms of patronage and for Buddhist specialist standing. The Theravādin movement, drawing upon its reformist roots in Śri Lanka, consciously formulates its programs to be compatible with those expressing modernist sensitivities. It has been especially successful in attracting middle-class women who desire more freedom in their activities and an intellectual-meditational dimension in their Buddhist practice. We have also seen how this movement promulgates anti-caste, anti-class, and democratic values, as well as accentuating an individualistic ethos in its programs.

The Tibetans have not followed any new course in relating to Newar laymen, but they have been open to performing rituals in Uray homes and flexible in adapting to a their ritual needs.

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#### Modernization from the Perspective of the Asan Tuladhars

Modern religious belief is dominated by several notions. Many Tuladhars have a sense that the present age is a decadent one compared to former times. Newar Buddhists accept the Indian Yuga system that specifies the present time as the Kālī Yuga, and they see human history locked into a decline that will inevitably affect Buddhist tradition. In this fundamental notion lies a very powerful critique of modern changes which have come to old Kathmandu. The Tuladhars may

express disappointment in the decadent Vajrācāryas or regret on losing half of their guṭhis over the past fifty years. In many cases they have tried to resist the decline. But as faits accomplis, the losses and decline are not experienced as a surprise: the direction of changes was accurately recorded in the texts and so it has been.

We have noted elsewhere that the fundamental doctrines of lay Buddhist understanding have held up well in the Tuladhar community. Regard for karma still conditions religious activity and understanding and Nirvāṇa is recognized as an ultimate goal, though it is a category of no immediate concern to those living in the present time. Avoiding hell and lesser rebirths as well as the possibility of gaining a heavenly rebirth (ideally in Sukhavati) are the prime motivations for making punya and following other religious regimens.

Up to now, Tuladhars have not lost their belief in deities: they still effusively honor the celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and pray to them for a variety of boons. Although mentioned in every Vajrayana ritual, the Bodhisattva ideal for humans has declined to being a minor awareness. The Tuladhars still patronize an immense religious pantheon, only but there has been a decline in belief in the lesser deities and demons and Tuladhar belief in the regular presence of dya in mediums and through priestly ritual has clearly fallen off. Intellectual positions that reduce all gods to one divine presence, to psychological reality, or (least commonly) to unproven theory have grown among a small circle of intellectuals in Asan Tol. But even for them, karma is rarely discarded. Likewise, there is little scepticism about the reality of astrological influence on human life, so that astrological charts are still carefully kept and auspicious moments



assiduously observed. The ethical practices leading toward practicing compassion and non-violence as well as the meditation goal of ekacitta are still the chief landmarks in lay Buddhist understanding.

Although there is nothing exclusively Buddhist in these notions, the Tuladhars remain firm in their self-proclaimed identity as Buddhists. Being a "Buddhist Newar" still carries great emotional force and meaning for them in their status competition with the Shresthas and in their political struggles with the Hindu Shah state.

The changes in Tuladhar religious belief have taken two different turns. One is to accept the validity of all world religions, but most do not abandon the hierarchy subordinating all to the Buddhist path. The second tendency is scepticism about all religious constructs and toward modern ideologies such as positivism. These trends have entered into Tuladhar intellectual life in many shapes, so that there is a wide range of responses that seek to reconcile the new ideas with older Buddhist belief.<sup>1</sup>

Change in Tuladhar belief correlates with literacy and contact-- through media -- with the world outside Nepal. Wealthy and well-educated Tuladhars have had extensive contact of this nature. Fluency in Nepali has extended Tuladhar awareness about other activists working in politics, religion, and literature in greater Nepal and fluency in Hindi has likewise opened up an awareness of various movements in India so that influences from visiting Indians, Hindi publications, and movies have entered into Asan Tol's collective

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<sup>1</sup>We found this to be especially true with regard to Marxist and scientific thought.

consciousness. This contact has expanded the Newar awareness of modern Hinduism in many areas, from devotional music to āyurvedic medicine, and even to mass-media swāmis like Rajneesh. Likewise, Marxist ideology has come to Nepal largely through Indian connections, although direct Chinese and Russian interaction has also been significant. Contact with the English language press (Time, Newsweek, etc.) and Westerners has likewise enhanced Tuladhar awareness of international politics, other cultures, and positivist - materialist outlooks.

We have discussed already how cultural media are a key category for cultural analysis, both historically and in the present. What may make this present era distinctive is that image technology (photography onward) has vastly expanded the human experience in Asan. As McLuhan and others have pointed out, electronic media represents a quantum change in the human condition. Gathering force slowly with the evolution of printing and wide spread literacy, furthered by the breakthrough of photography and long-distance communication, and finally culminating in electronic mass media (movies, video), information technology transforms the human experience (Carpenter 1972). Nepal's isolation from the outside world delayed Newar contact with the early stages of this "revolution," but in the last thirty years, places like Asan Tol have absorbed these new media rapidly.

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<sup>1</sup> During my fieldwork, I observed the coming of the video boom to Kathmandu where over 150 VCRs were introduced almost overnight. Entrepreneurs opened up video salons that were packed night and day for almost 10 months. [The showing of a Hindi movie "Kranti" (which portrayed the story of a Himalayan king overthrown by revolution) led the government to ban public showings but families still show videos in their homes with friends and a wide selection of western movies are available in the open market. Most Western movies have been banned in the movie halls that have been operating since the 1950s.]

The suddenness of video technology has been especially forceful.

The effect of the new media on religious belief has been to introduce a new constellation of competing ideologies from the outside world. In addition to diverting considerable excess funds to the acquisition of media technology, the impact has been in terms of awareness of the outside world and has likely been more subtle. In Carpenter's analysis, the experience of photographic and electronic media forces a conceptual split in the construction of consciousness that separates the human subject from outside reality. The result is that "no one who ever comes to know himself with the detachment of the [media] observer is ever the same again." By its very nature, electronic media undermines perceptual "sets" that underlie are basic to reality in traditional societies<sup>1</sup>. As McLuhan and Fiore point out, "Media, by altering the environment, evoke in us unique ratios in sense perceptions. The extension of any one sense alters the way we think and act and the way we perceive the world. When these ratios change, men change (1972: 41)." If this analysis is correct, then the recent overnight introduction of cassette audio and video tape media

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<sup>1</sup>A fuller statement of Carpenter's understanding of media on traditional cultures is of relevance here:

"[Unlike print]...electronic media does not transport bits of classified information. Instead, it transports the viewer. It takes his spirit on a trip...

But here the contradiction occurs... [it] may make the viewer's spirit an actual witness to the spectacle of life, but he cannot interfere... and suffers... because his being is phantasmal. So he participates solely as a dreamer, in no way responsible. All television becomes a dream...

We may think of electronic media as visual, recording a world "out there." But it records a world within. Sight surrenders to insight, and dream replaces outer reality... Far from expanding consciousness, electronic media repudiates it in favor of the dream (65-66)."

Plate 144: The New Electronic Media



Plate 145: Buda Janko and "The Great Escape" ( A Video Salon  
Advertisement for the Western Movie)

recent overnight introduction of cassette audio and video tape media into Asan Tol represents a powerful force affecting the entire Tuladhar community.

Electronic media have therefore quickly introduced new doctrines, new standards of truth, and entirely new cultural experiences into Asan Tol in a very short period. Although those with videos and cassette recorders are the wealthiest, their media experience has been well radiated through the extensive kin and friendship networks. Particularly noteworthy is the role that recorded music has in disseminating Western taste and norms to the younger generation in Asan Tol. Disco music and western movies have taken their place with Levi Jeans and long hair among the great majority of youth who wish to live "in the American style."<sup>1</sup>

The impact of electronic media is not one dimensional and not simply corrosive of older traditions. Newars have used the cassette technology to tape anthologies of old Newari songs and video cameras to record marriages and other rituals. (This phenomenon has been noted in India (Ninian 1983: 36). Photographs and printed media have added to the religious environment in Tuladhar homes and connections with other Buddhist countries and worldwide organizations have been accentuated via printed media. The Theravadins have been the most innovative with media, which has certainly contributed to their success.

The process of Asan's adaptation to a world with electronic media

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<sup>1</sup>In Dagu Bahā, the wealthy Tuladhars who own a video would occasionally invite the courtyard families to view movies.

has meant that a new "media world" has been added on to the Tuladhar experience. With its many alternative realities, these electronic media compete with the "programs" of the tradition for patronage and interest, and free time. Even when used to preserve old tradition-- recording Newari songs, reproducing sacred art, or video-taping wedding ceremonies -- media has added a new dimension to the ongoing life in Asan.

By its mere presence and use, media has introduced changes in understanding reality and self and is transforming Newar culture by changing human experience and altering the foundations of cultural authority. In traditional Bahā Buddhism, a Tuladhar's understanding of Buddhism was almost totally derived from what the Vajrācāryas told him, either directly (in initiations or story telling) or indirectly via the traditional art and architectural media. Now, there are many sources of information on Buddhist doctrine. This example supports Berger's characterization of modernization being, in part, an unprecedented inundation of choice (Berger 1969: 18).

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At this point, however, the outcome of this collision is not clear. According to McLuhan, the impact is immense: "[media] are so pervasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, or unaltered (1964: 26)."

While McLuhan seems correct in pointing out that electronic media represent an irresistible force that is somehow more compelling to the human brain than earlier media, it is not clear that the inherent "message" of the media is universal or independent of the cultural

context. Carpenter has shown that in simple societies the transformations that electronic media introduce are profound and destructive of the earlier culture. But in societies with more highly developed traditional cultural media, the new technology need not be seen as a monolithic destroyer. Indian cinema, for example, digested, mastered, and then harnessed mass entertainment technology into the service of traditional culture. Many Hindi movies "say the same things" with as the older cultural media.<sup>1</sup> Even in this role, however, completely new specialists and economic networks are created that have little to do with the older system. If media has the capacity of "colonizing" cultural environments (Carpenter 1974: 66), then for the Newars and other Nepalis, the future of their distinct "outpost" cultures will be determined by their ability to withstand the initial encounter and eventually use the media technology for its own "programs". The question thus becomes economic and social: who will have the resources and control to use electronic media for its own cultural goals ?

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<sup>1</sup>In this reasoning we follow Dumont's analysis of "Sanskritization" as simply the most developed expression of pan-Indian ideas and relationships. We must also disagree with Carpenter's determination that media necessarily destroys old cultures (1959: 52).

### Conclusions: Tradition and Modernity in Asan Tol

At this point, one can make only some very modest conclusions about the subject of recent change. The rapid rate of contemporary social change in the Kathmandu Valley must be emphasized: Nepal emerged as an isolated, feudalistic society only very recently. The best image of this modernization process would be of an earthquake, a violent shock that has knocked down a great deal of loosely attached debris and has left only the firmest foundations standing. The question for the future is, to continue the analogy, which social and cultural traditions originating from a very different past will be rebuilt by the generations who are living in an increasingly different future ?

The increasing pluralism in Buddhist groups has led us to adopt the notion of "religious field" to analyze the Tuladhar perspective. For the Urāy, lamas and bhikṣus have added to the vitality of Buddhism in their country. In their view, Buddhism has remained a meaningful source of world view and identity. Although the Vajrācāryas are losing their dominance and Bahā Buddhism is crumbling, the many Urāy have viewed this development with considerable indifference. As lay Buddhists, they need punya and proficient, spiritually endowed ritualists. In business and so in the religious life, one should not make bad investments and reap no return on dāna. Thus, the patrons who formerly supported the indigenous Buddhist tradition have slowly withdrawn their material support from the actors and institutions of Bahā Buddhism. This along with the withdrawal of royal patronage and protection of the Newar sangha's past endowment has led to the present state.





Plate 146: Buddhas and Honda: Old and New Foci of Surplus Wealth

Despite the weight of conservatism leaning against social innovation, the Vajrācāryas have shown the vitality of attempted revival. In Vajrācārya public story-telling, in books and periodicals by Newar intellectuals-- Vajrācāryas and others-- which have applauded the value of their own traditions<sup>1</sup>, and in the Vajrācārya school set up by Badri Guraju, there are signs that there is considerable power remaining in Bahā Buddhism. The future of the Bahā Buddhist tradition clearly lies in this realm of rehabilitating the role of the Vajrācāryas so they can function as effective integrators and exemplars of Vajrāyāna Buddhism.

In the past, the rich merchants in Newar society were a key group in maintaining Bahā Buddhism: in many ways they held the culture together through their patronage and leadership. Formerly, the characteristic way to spend excess wealth was through the conspicuous patronage traditions. Nowadays, there are many new ways to spend this wealth, especially on luxuries imported from the world outside Nepal: automobiles, motorcycles, stereos, cameras, video players, and other household furnishings. Religious institutions now get a lesser percentage of the rich class' largesse and the richer Tuladhars have also been the first to adopt new innovations and "drop out" of the normal agenda of the traditional lifestyle. In Dagu Bahā, for example, the children of the richest families played the least in the courtyard, and the adults of these families were less likely to participate in regular bahā activities and festivals. Thus, the upper

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<sup>1</sup>This has been most effective as modern Tuladhars' do share a widespread view of their old traditions' worth and their Buddhism being the foundation of their own identity vis-a-vis other Nepalis.

classes are "opting out" of the older lifestyle by adopting foreign cultural innovations. Their economic choices and their increasingly individualized, more private lifestyle signal profound changes in the older cultural traditions the elite class once championed.

As their name suggests, the Tuladhars "hold the scales" that regulate commercial transactions in Asan Tol. As the Vajrācārya sangha competes for Buddhist standing with the lamas and bhikṣus, the Tuladhars will likewise weigh their contributions and determine the future of Buddhist tradition in Kathmandu.

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**GLOSSARY**

GLOSSARY OF KEY WORDS

A

ācārya dīksā: the initiation into Vajrayāna Buddhist empowerment and ritual practice.

ācārya: "master"

āgam: the shrine room where images of Vajrayāna deities are kept; located in both bahās and private homes.

āgam dya: the main (Vajrayāna) deity of the āgam.

Aji: literally, "grandmother;" also used to refer to the midwife, Diri Aji.

Ajmā: used specifically to refer to Harati, the smallpox goddess also known as "Sitala;" an epithet applied to any female deity.

añ yāye: to touch one's head to the feet of another; añ yāye can be done with the hand by first touching one's hand to one's head, and then the other person or image.

Anagārikā: literally a "homeless one"; in modern Theravāda usage this means a man or woman who has taken the vow of celibacy but not the full ordination of a bhikṣu or bhiksuni.

arati: the flame of a lamp offered to a deity and treated as prasād.

asok chaitya: a shrine (chaitya) that, according to Newar belief, was established by the King Asoka; asoka chaityas are usually located opposite the entrance of the kwapa dya of the bahas.

aṣṭa maṅgala: the eight auspicious things: kalash; endless knot; banner, umbrella, yak tails; fish; wheel.

aṣṭamī: the eighth day of the lunar month.

ātman: "soul".

avadāna: "story"; in the Buddhist tradition, these are about the Buddha or Buddhist saints.

avatār: "incarnation".

āyur: "life force".

āyurvedic: the indigenous medical tradition of India that relies on herbal potions and humoral analysis of bodily disease.

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B

bahā: the colloquial Newari name for vihara, "monastery"; at present, the bahās are residential courtyards that are dominated by a main shrine.

Baikuntha: The heavenly paradise ruled by Vishnu.

bājan: the old Newari name for musical group.

bāpā: a shrine box especially for Lakṣmī.

bāre cuyegu: the first initiation for Vajracarya and Sakya boys in which they become bhiksus for a few days, but later renounce for the Mahayana.

bentali: a long white cloth worn by elder men at times of celebration; it is wrapped around the head as a turban.

Bhāirav: the fierce manifestation of Siva.

bhajan: a modern singing group playing instruments imported from India: harmonium, cymbals, bells, etc.

bhikṣu: Buddhist almsman; used now only by ordained Theravadin monks.



bhiṃ dya: The Newari name for the Bhimasena, the Pandava brother and deity known from the Mahābhārata.

bhūt: malevolent spirit.

bodhicitta: the thought of enlightenment; the enlightened mind; in Vajrayāna Buddhism, it also means the force that moves upward through the centermost channel in the body's subtle physiology.

Buddhamārgi: a newly coined term used to designate a Buddhist devotee in contrast to a Sivamārgi, a follower of Siva.

byenke: "release".

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## C

ca:re : the day before the new moon according to the lunar cycle.

chaitya: a Buddhist shrine; in Newar Buddhism, the directional Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are placed on chaityas and stupas (reliquary mounds) often surmount the structure.

chamkala: the Newari term for an untouchable sweeper.

chiba dya: the colloquial Newari term for chaitya (see above).

cipa: "polluted"; used to refer to food. (Nepali: jutho)

cwasa: a place in town where polluted objects are dumped.

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## D

dakṣiṇā: stipend or donation.

damai: former leatherworkers and tailors, men of this caste group are often professional musicians.

dāna (dān): "gift"; "donation".

darśan: having eye contact with a deity or holy man.

dasami: the tenth day of the lunar month.

dekka: the Vajrayāna initiation bestowed by a Vajrācārya master.

dhāpa: an elongated two-headed drum played by Newar laymen.

dhāpa bājan: a musical group that accompanies festival processions and, in Asan, plays before the Annapurna temple for a month each year.

dhau: yogurt.

Digu Dya: a lineage deity whose shrine is located outside the city boundaries.

dya: "deity", used to refer to any worshipped divinity or object (e.g. chaitya), Hindu or Buddhist.

dya cheli yāye: to do pradakṣiṇā, "circumambulation".

dya wa: mha: a medium.

dyawai: the cloth used to cover the dead body in cremation processions.

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## E

ekacitta: concentrated one-pointedness of mind, the goal of meditation.

ekādaśī: the eleventh day of the lunar month.

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G

gana dya: Ganesh, the elephant headed deity, son of Śiva and Parvatī.  
ghāsā: small bits of food removed from one's meal plate; this offering that is given to the deities must be made before someone begins to eat.

godān: the gift of a cow to a Brahmin.

gompa: (Tibetan) monastery.

gon: a low Jyapu caste that specializes in cremations.

Guṇlā: a monsoon season month during which the Newar Buddhists are especially active in meditation, ritual, and visiting Svayambhū.

Guṇlā Bājan: a same-caste musical group makes processions to religious shrines; three kinds of drums, three kinds of cymbals, and other woodwind instruments also may accompany these.

guruju: "honored teacher (guru)", this term is traditional used to refer to a Vajrācārya.

gurumā: traditionally used to refer to a Vajrācārya's wife, modern Newars also refer to the female Anagarikas with this term.

guṭhi: an association with a defined religious or social activity.

guṭhiyar: a member of a guṭhi.

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H

hāku sāphu: the "black book" used to keep a record of guṭhi attendance.

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J

jajmān: "client".

janko: a term used to refer to two life-cycle rites: Macca Janko, the first rice feeding; and Buda Janko, a rite in old age.

jāta: horoscope.

Jātaka: a type of Buddhist literature describing Shakyamuni Buddha in one of his earlier births.

jātrā: festival.

jilajon: the husband of a daughter.

jīv: in Newari usage, "consciousness".

jogi: a Newar caste whose duty it is to collect offerings and feast servings in the name of a dead one.

Joshi: astrologer. (also called "Jyotis".)

ju: "fitting, proper".

ju pin: the upper tier castes of the Newar caste system; from the perspective of those at the top, those from whom water can be accepted.

Jyāpu (female: Jyāpuuni): the traditional Newar agricultural caste.

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K

kalash: water vessel.

karuṇā: compassion.

Karuṇāmaya: one epithet of Avalokiteśvara, the celestial Bodhisattva.

kasai: Newar butcher caste name.

kawa: subdivision of a guṭhi or bājan.

kisli: a type of offering consisting of uncooked rice in a bowl to which a betal nut and a coin have been added.

kumārī: young girl; technically, a Newari woman who has completed the Thi puja samskāra and is regarded as an especially pure being embodying prajna.

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## L

lami: a woman who is a wedding matchmaker and who has a role to play throughout the marriage rituals.

las khus: a ritual of welcoming performed by the eldest woman of the house.

linga: the phallic image in which the Hindu deity Siva is worshipped.

lokācar: public opinion.

lokeśvara: lit. "lord of the world", an epithet used for both Siva and the celestial Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.

luku mahādya: Śiva (mahādya) as he is worshipped by Newar Buddhists in the refuse pit.

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## M

Mahādya: popular epithet of Siva.

Mahāṅkal: a fierce male deity regarded as a protector of Buddhist homes and bahās.

maju: "incorrect, improper", opposite of ju.

maju pin: the lowest division of Newar castes.

maṇḍala: a two-dimensional representation of a deity's temple; a paradigm for organizing sacred space and for personal meditation.

mantra: one or more syllable utterances of Sanskrit language used in meditation on and worship to specific deities.

mhāy masta: married-out daughter

mu bahā: main bahā of the Vajrācārya sangha. In Kathmandu, all Vajrācārya bahās are affiliated with one of the mu bahās.

mudrā: hand gesture.

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## N

nāga: snake deity; every vicinity in the Kathmandu Valley is thought to be ruled over by a nāga.

nāmaskar: the gesture of respect when a person presses both palms together at chest height.

narak: a place of rebirth marked by terrible suffering and torture.

Nārāyan: epithet of Vishnu.

Nāṣa Dya: The Nātarājā ("lord of dance") form of Siva; Newars worship for skill in all performance arts.

nau (female-nauni): barber caste name.

Nava Dharma or Nava Grantha: "The Nine Tomes" specially recognized in Bahā Buddhism.

nava graha: "the nine planets".

navamī: the ninth day of the lunar month.  
newā: bhāy: the colloquial reference to the Newari language.  
nī la: : pure water (which must be from a river or clean well), a necessity for all Newar rituals.  
nikhan: the first initiation given to upper caste Buddhist laymen.  
nisi yāye: to ritually purify the house.  
nitya pūjā: daily pūjā.

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## P

pāju: mother's brother.  
Pālā: headman or leader of a guṭhi or the bājan.  
pañcāmī: the fifth day of the lunar month.  
pancopacāra: a pūjā with five types of offerings.  
pāp: bad karma; the opposite of punya.  
phuki: the patrilineal descent group that acts together on ritual occasions.  
piṇḍa: an offering made in the sraddha pūjā to departed ancestors.  
piśāca: a class of malevolent deities.  
prajñā: "insight", a faculty of "clear vision" necessary to reach Buddhist enlightenment.  
prāṇāvāyu: "life force".  
prasād: the returned puja offerings which are thought empowered and medicinal.  
preta: a class of spirit thought to have large stomachs and a small throats that lead to intense suffering.  
pūjā: ritual offering.  
pūjā ba: the tray that Newars use to make ritual offerings.  
pūjārī: a shrine attendant; one who performs puja.  
puṇhi: the full moon day of the lunar month.  
puṇya: "merit".  
purohit: ritual priest.  
puruṣan cwanegu: the practice of Vajrācāryas going to meditative retreats seeking power and prajñā.

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## R

ratha: a wheeled chariot in which deities are placed for processions.

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## S

sādhana: ritual and meditative identification with a deity, the basis of Vajrayāna ritualism.  
sādhu: a wandering Hindu holy man.  
samskāra: life-cycle rite.  
Samyak: the largest Newar Buddhist festival in which giant images are displayed and all of the Vajrācārya sangha in the Kathmandu Valley is fed; the name of a person who alone sponsors a Samyak festival.  
sangha: community of ordained Buddhist monks.  
saṅlhū: the day when a new solar month begins.

sanyāsin: a Hindu order of sādhus usually identified by a guru lineage.  
seit: an auspicious, astrologically determined moment.  
srāddha: a pūjā to nourish a departed person.  
śrāvaka: a Mahayana term used to refer to the follower of the Hinayana (or Theravada) Buddhist tradition.  
stotra: textual verse.  
Sukhāvati: a Buddhist paradise established by Amitabha Buddha and ruled over by the celestial Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.  
sukunda: a lamp used in Newar rituals which has Ganesh on the front and nāgas on the back.  
sūrdya: the sun deity.  
sūtra: a text thought to be a record of a discourse by the Buddha.  
Svayambhū: lit. "Self Existent One"; the name of the most important shrine in Newar Buddhism.  
swarga: heaven.

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## T

ta:chen: lit. "own house", used by women to refer to their natal home.  
tāremam: an old Newari greeting used solely by Buddhist Newars.  
tathāgata: a Buddha.  
thakali (female-thakāli-naki): the elder who is in charge of a ritual or ceremony.  
thi maju: lit. "touching is improper"; the term used to indicate a menstruating woman.  
ṭikā: a type of prasād in the form of a dot placed on the forehead.  
tīrtha: a sacred space usually located at a watercourse confluence.  
tol: neighborhood.  
toraṇa: tympanum.  
Tuladhar: lit. "Scale-holder"; a high caste merchant caste name.  
tuta: colloquial Newari for stotra.

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## U

upāsaka: devout lay Buddhist.  
Urāy: a "blanket" caste name for eight merchant subcastes.

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## V

vajra: lit. "thunderbolt"; a ritual object used by the Vajracarya priests (and lamas) symbolizing upaya, "skill in means";  
vajrācārya: lit. "master of the vajra"; a spiritual master who practices according to Vajrayāna Buddhism; in Newar culture, an endogamous caste whose profession is Buddhist priesthood.  
vajrayāna: lit. "the vajra vehicle", the last phase of Buddhist evolution that emphasizes sadhana practice, and guru initiation, and fierce deities.  
viḥāra: Buddhist monastery.  
vipassanā: a type of breathing mindfulness meditation especially emphasized by modern Theravādin teachers.

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Y

yaksa: demon.

yantra: a geometric diagram used to symbolize a deity and for  
meditation.

## APPENDICES

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- A.....The Origins of the Kathmandu Valley and the History of Svayambhu according to the Svayambhu Purana.
- B.....Architectural Drawings of Two Tuladhar Houses.
- C.....Summary of Information on Bahas in Asan Tol
- D.....Summary of Festival Participation.
- E.....The Popular Media of Baha Buddhism: Short Synopses

**APPENDIX A:** Synopsis of the Svayambhu Purana's Account of the Creation of the Kathmandu Valley, the origins of the religious topography, and the founding of Svayambhu.

In the Satya Yuga, the present Valley of Nepal was a lake fourteen miles square. From still more ancient times it had been a holy place for all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and nagarajas. From this time onward, the lake was called Nagavasahrada and the Naga Karkotaka was its king.

At that time a Tathagata Vipaswi came with his disciples on a pilgrimage. (One disciple, Dharma Satya, would be reborn in a later age as Shakyamuni) After bathing in the lake, Vipaswi walked around to Nargarjun peak, also called Jama Cho, on the northwest shore. From there, he realized that there was every kind of lake flower growing except the lotus. Vipaswi then took a lotus root and after saying a mantra over it, threw it far into the lake. He also made a prediction: the lotus was to have 1000 petals; On top of it would be the flame of "Svayambhu Dharmadhatu"; beneath the lotus, a small hill would arise. Vipaswi Tathagata also predicted that this shrine would be a famous place for all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and a spot for reaching enlightenment.

During the tenure of the next Tathagata called Sikhi, an earthquake occurred. He explained the earthquake as indicative of the blossoming of the lotus and the appearance of a one hand high flame at the nagavasahrada lake. All of the gods, he said, even Sesa Nag, Vishnu's naga, had come to worship at this place. Sikhi Tathagata also taught that this place was a center for the five directional Buddhas and all Bodhisattvas. He led his disciples to the lake and stayed at the peak to the southwest called Chandragiri or Dilla Cho. This Tathagata ended his life there, meditating on the Svayambhu flame. His disciples became devotees of the shrine.

After many other in the lineage of Buddhas had come and gone, a Tathagata Visvabhu appeared on the earth. Together with his disciples he came to the lake and stayed on the highest peak to the southeast called Pulchowk (also called Pu Cho). At that time another earthquake occurred and Visvabhu explained its meaning as a sign of a future Bodhisattva's draining the lake, making a valley for human settlement.

At this very time, Manjusri Bodhisattva, while meditating in his native country Mahacin, became aware of Visvabhu's predictions and soon set out toward the lake with a retinue of followers including his two wives (Kesini and Upakesini), his chandrahas (sword), prajna texts, and lion mount. After leaving his two wives on Pulchowk and Chandragiri, respectively, he approached the lotus and meditated upon it. Manjusri decided that if he drained the lake, Svayambhu would be more accessible to pilgrims and the valley excellent for human settlement. He then found the lowest point to be in the south and struck that spot with his sword, causing the waters to gush out. To assuage the injured hillside, he promised to place a shrine there to Avalokitesvara. Manjusri continued to empty water from all places. While doing so he had to subdue many angry demons and convince the local nagas not to leave the Valley environs. Without the nagas regulating the rains and insuring the fertility of the soils, human settlement would be impossible. Manjusri located the root of the lotus at Guhyesvari and shored up protection of it there. Satisfied at his



work, he then created a shrine on the hill behind Svayambhu and retreated to meditate on the Svayambhu Dharmadhatu.

The next Buddha, Krakucchanda, made a pilgrimage to the Valley in the Treta Yuga. He stayed at Sivapuri (also called Si pu cho) to the northeast. Many people came to hear him preach and asked to be ordained as monks. But there was no water with which to do the tonsure. To obtain this, Krakucchanda created a small stream, the Bagmati, with the power of his voice. He told the female spirit of the new stream that wherever another stream joined hers, there a sacred confluence called a tirtha should be established.

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#### The Foundation of the Svayambhu Stupa According to the Svayambhu Purana

At the beginning of the Dvapara Yuga, Kasyapa Buddha made a pilgrimage to Nepal and visited all of the holy sites. Afterwards he left and traveled to the kingdom of Gouda and met the king, Prachanda Deva. Kasyapa Buddha preached the Dharma to the king and recommended a pilgrimage to Svayambhu, adding that if he did so he, the king, would become a tantric master.

The king followed Kasyapa's advice and stayed at Svayambhu for long periods of meditation. Thinking ahead to the upcoming Kali Yuga and the great difficulties to be encountered in preserving the Dharmadhatu flame of Svayambhu, he prayed to Manjusri for assistance in doing this work immediately. Manjusri responded by telling him to build a stone and brick chaitya to cover the Dharmadhatu. Before he could do this, he had to take the Vajracarya initiation, which Manjusri gave to him. He also was given the Namasanghiti text and instructed in many mantras and dharanis.

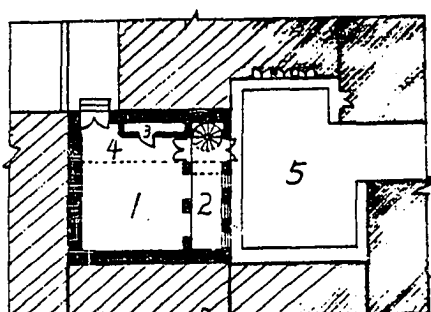
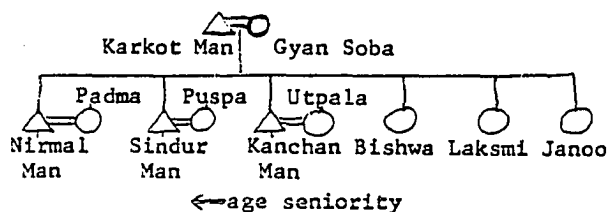
Santikar—the king's name after his initiation—dug a hole for the flame and then covered it with a translucent gem. The anda and harmika were raised over this and surmounted by a 13 level spire capped by a gold umbrella. The Directional Buddhas were placed in their proper shrines, with Vairocana to the right of Akshobya.

Santikar also erected shrines to the five elements around the site: Vayupur for the wind (Vayu); Vasupur for the earth (Basundhara); Nagpur for the waters (Vasuki Naga); and Akashapur for the sky (akasha). After the work was complete and a chaitya was also erected on the second hill to Manjusri, Santikar retired to the last shrine to the akasha element, where he meditated and reached the trikaljnani state (knowing past, present, and future, a quality of an enlightened one). He attracted many disciples, gained many siddhi-s, and finally retired to a shrine far inside where he is still thought to be alive and in trance.

# APPENDIX B: Architectural Drawings of Two Tuladhar Houses

## TULADHAR HOUSE , BAL KUMARI

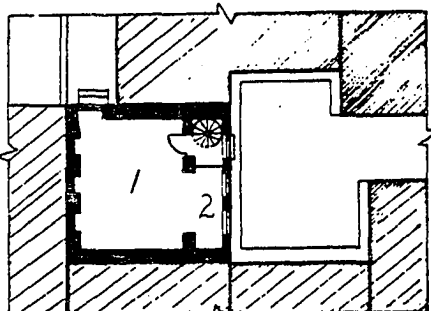
### House Inhabitants



ground floor plan

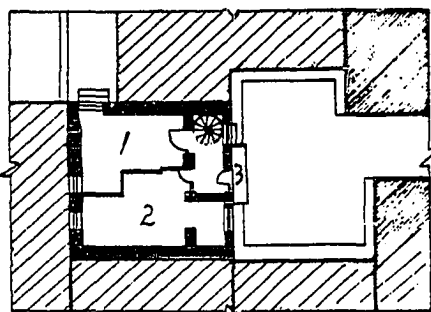
### Key

- 1--Storeroom
- 2--Optical Workshop
- 3--Toilet
- 4--Entranceway
- 5--Courtyard



first floor plan

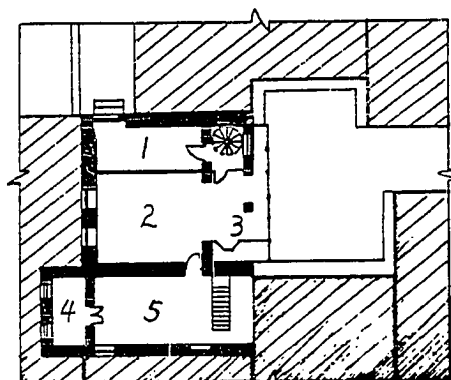
- 1--Living room
- 2--Kanchan Man's sleeping quarters



second floor plan

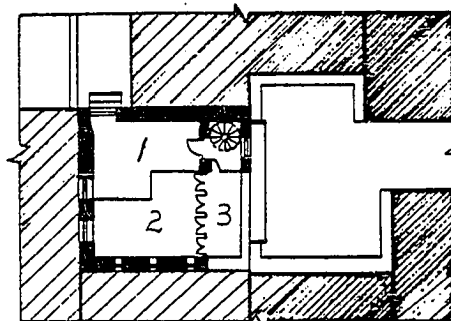
- 1--Nirmal Man's bedroom
- 2--Sisters' bedroom
- 3--Washroom and shower

TULADHAR HOUSE , BAL KUMARI (2)



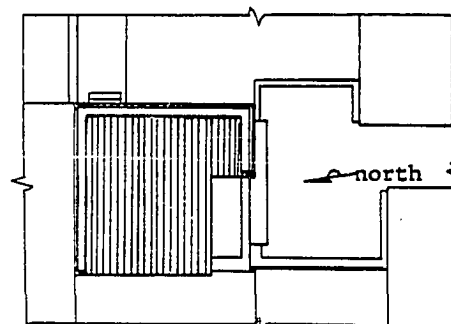
third floor plan

- 1--Karkot Man's bedroom
- 2--Eating room
- 3--Hearth area
- 4--AGAM
- 5--elder brother's feasting room



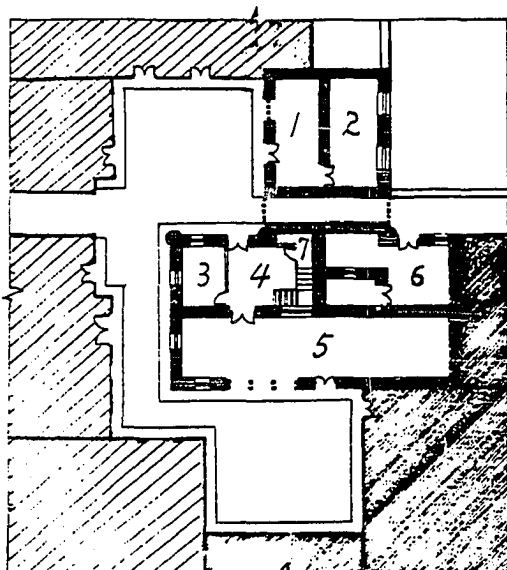
fourth floor plan

- 1--Sindur Man's bedroom
- 2--PUJA KOTHA
- 3--balcony

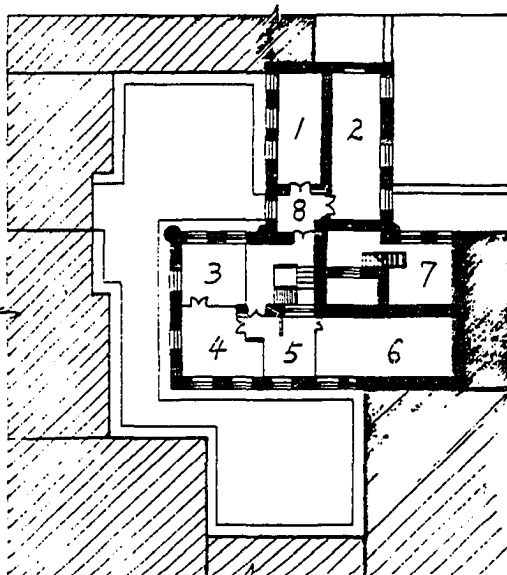


roof plan

## TULADHAR HOUSE, TONLACHI (1)



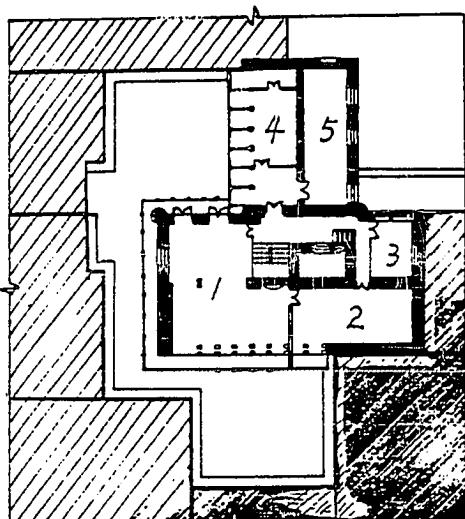
- 1--Storage
- 2--Storage
- 3--Washing area
- 4--Entrance hallway
- 5--Storage
- 6--Storage
- 7--Toilet



- 1--Siddhartha Man's bedroom
- 2--Sudarshan Man's bedroom
- 3--Storage
- 4--Tri Ratna Man's Bedroom
- 5--Storage
- 6--Gyan Maya's and Padma Tara's bedroom
- 7--Storage
- 8--Entrance hall

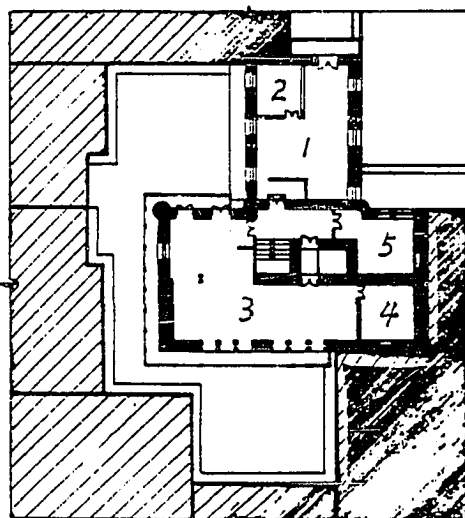
first floor plan

TULADHAR HOUSE, TONLACHI (2)



second floor plan

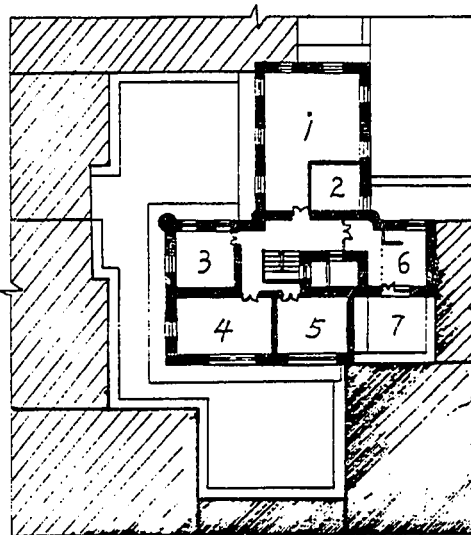
- 1--Workroom with map rolling machine
- 2--Sudristi Man's bedroom
- 3--Storage
- 4--Gyan Darsha Man's bedroom
- 5--Pratyak Man's bedroom



third floor plan

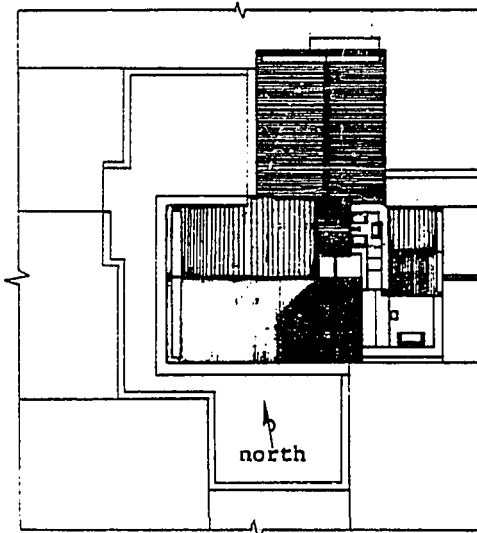
- 1--Kitchen #1
- 2--Locana's and Usnisa's bedroom
- 3--Open room, feasting area
- 4--Kitchen #2
- 5--Sarva Gyan Man's room

## TULADHAR HOUSE, TONLACHI (3)



fourth floor plan

- 1--Kitchen #3
- 2--Food Storage
- 3--Puja Kotha
- 4--Svayambhu Man's Bedroom
- 5--Tara Devi's Bedroom
- 6--Tibetan style Puja Kotha
- 7--Balcony



roof plan

- 1--Meditation room

| <u>Mu Bahas</u><br>(Sanskrit Name)                                | <u>Sangha</u>             | <u>Earliest Date</u> | <u>Kwapa Dya</u> | <u>Other comments</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| TA CHE BAH<br>(Surat Sri Mahavihara)                              | Vajracarya                | 1640                 | Akshobhya        | Named after Surat Vajra, great teacher who traveled to Tibet and gained the respect of Tibetan lamas.                                                                                                                  |
| JANA BAH<br>(Kanakachaitya Mahavihara)                            | Mixed: Sakya & Vajracarya | 1401                 | Akshobhya        | The <u>baha</u> itself is named after the old <u>asoka chaitya</u> that stands before the entrance to the Avalokitesvara temple.                                                                                       |
| <u>Sakha Bahas</u>                                                |                           |                      |                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <u>Of Ta Chen Baha:</u><br>DAGU BAH<br>(Rang Bhuwan Mahavihara )  | Vajracarya                | 1620                 | Akshobhya        | The sole Vajracarya family lives above the <u>kwapa dya</u> shrine.                                                                                                                                                    |
| <u>Of Nhu Baha:</u><br>HAKU BAH<br>(Harsa Chaitya Mahavihara)     | Vajracarya                | 1744                 | Padmapani        | There are no Vajracaryas still living in the <u>baha</u> ; <u>nitya puja</u> done by Nhu Baha representative every day.                                                                                                |
| <u>Of Jhwa Baha:</u><br>DHALSHIKVAY BAH<br>(Gotam Sri Mahavihara) | Vajracarya                | 1720                 | Akshobhya        | Someone from the Jhwa Baha whose <u>sangha</u> performs the daily <u>nitya puja</u> ; no Vajracarya family lives in the <u>baha</u> .                                                                                  |
| <u>Kacca Baha</u>                                                 |                           |                      |                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| ASAN BAH<br>Chaitya Mahavihara)                                   | Sakya                     | 1691                 | Akshobhya        | The very high <u>Asoka Chaitya</u> in the (Asoka courtyard is distinctive; The Tuladhar Gunla Bajan always passes through the <u>baha</u> ; Sakyas affiliated with this <u>baha</u> also live in adjoining courtyards. |

APPENDIX D: Summary of Festival ParticipationAPPENDIX SUMMARY OF YEARLY FESTIVALS

| #  | NAME                    | INVOLVEMENT BY:<br>TULADHARS / SHRESTHAS                      | OTHER MAIN<br>ACTORS                                                  | URĀY GUTHI<br>SUPPORT                              | PROCESSIONS | PILGRIMAGE                          |
|----|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1  | GANTHA MUGA             | patron / patron<br><u>pūjā</u> / <u>pūjā</u>                  | Chamkala, Pore                                                        | none                                               | yes         | no                                  |
| 2  | GUṆLĀ                   | <u>pūjā</u> / none<br>patron<br>meditation                    | Vajrācāryas<br>Theravādins<br>Sākyas                                  | Many <u>guthis</u><br>in the Buddhist<br>community | yes         | Svayambhū                           |
| 3  | NĀG PAÑCHAMĪ            | rare / <u>pūjā</u>                                            | Family elders                                                         | none                                               | no          | no                                  |
| 4  | SĀ PĀRU<br>or Gāi Jātrā | none / patron                                                 | Hindu mourners                                                        | none                                               | yes         | no                                  |
| 5  | KRISHNA<br>AṢṬAMĪ       | observer / observer<br>display / display                      | Krishna temple<br><u>guthiyars</u>                                    | none                                               | yes         | no                                  |
| 6  | BWĀYĀ KWĀ<br>SWAYEGU    | household / household<br><u>pūjās</u> / <u>pūjās</u>          | Vajrācāryas<br>Brahmans                                               | none                                               | no          | Gorkhana                            |
| 7  | TĪJ                     | none / women fasting<br><u>pūjā</u>                           | Brahman<br>storytellers                                               | none                                               | no          | riverside                           |
| 8  | CATHĀ                   | household / household<br><u>pūjā</u> / <u>pūjā</u>            | none                                                                  | none                                               | no          | no                                  |
| 9  | INDRA JĀTRĀ             | display / display<br><u>pūjā</u> / <u>pūjā</u><br>processions | Buddhist Mourners<br>Royal Kumārī<br>King Vajrācāryas                 | many                                               | yes         | Circumambulation<br>of the old city |
| 10 | MOHINI<br>or Dasain     | <u>pūjās</u> / <u>pūjās</u>                                   | temple <u>pūjārīs</u><br>Vajrācāryas, Brahman<br>government officials | family <u>guthis</u>                               | yes         | Nava Ratri<br><u>tīrtha</u> groups  |



## YEARLY FESTIVALS

(Continued)

| #  | NAME               | TULADHARS/SHRESTHAS                            | INVOLVEMENT BY:<br>ACTORS                        | OTHER MAIN<br>ACTORS                                         | URAY GUTHI<br>SUPPORT | PROCESSIONS                      | PILGRIMAGE |
|----|--------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|------------|
| 11 | ANNAPURNA<br>JĀTRĀ | <u>pūjā</u> / <u>puja</u>                      | Jyāpu Temple attendants                          | Thimi <u>guṭhi</u> , Asan Bhajan<br>Vajrācārya <u>Pūjārī</u> | none                  | yes                              | no         |
| 12 | SI GHA:<br>JĀTRĀ   | <u>pūjā</u> / none                             | Bahā <u>Guṭhi</u><br>Asan Bhajan                 | family <u>guṭhis</u>                                         | yes                   | no                               |            |
| 13 | SAUNTI<br>or Tihar | <u>pūjā</u> / <u>pūjā</u><br>display / display | household elders                                 | none                                                         | no                    | no                               |            |
| 14 | DHĀPA<br>BĀJAN     | drum playing / none<br><u>pūjā</u>             | Tol Vajrācārya<br>Jyāpu musician                 | Guṇlā Bājan                                                  | no                    | no                               |            |
| 15 | HALIMANI<br>BUYE   | <u>pūjā</u> / <u>pūjā</u><br>display / display | neighborhood organizers                          | none                                                         | no                    | no                               |            |
| 16 | GAHALBA DYA        | <u>pūjā</u> / <u>pūjā</u><br>display / display | none                                             | none                                                         | no                    | no                               |            |
| 17 | BALACATURDASĪ      | <u>pūjā</u> / <u>pūjā</u>                      | Vajrācāryas, Brahmins                            | several                                                      | no                    | Paśupati<br>Svayambhu            |            |
| 18 | YO MARI<br>PUNHI   | <u>pūjā</u> / <u>pūjā</u>                      | none                                             | none                                                         | no                    | no                               |            |
| 19 | JANA BAHĀ<br>DYA I | patron / none<br><u>pūjā</u>                   | Vajrācāryas, Sākyas<br>Kansakārs<br>Royal Kumārī | Kansakār                                                     | no                    | no                               |            |
| 20 | MAGH<br>SANKRANTI  | bathing / bathing<br><u>pūjā</u> <u>pūjā</u>   | none                                             | none                                                         | no                    | Sankamol<br>other <u>tīrthas</u> |            |

## YEARLY FESTIVALS

| (Continued) |                                 | INVOLVEMENT BY:                                                   | OTHER MAIN                                                           | URĀY GUṬHI                   |                     |                              |
|-------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| #           | NAME                            | TULADHARS/SHRESTHAS                                               | ACTORS:                                                              | SUPPORT                      | PROCESSIONS         | PILGRIMAGE                   |
| 21          | SRI PAÑCHAMĪ                    | <u>pūjā</u> / <u>pūjā</u>                                         | none                                                                 | none                         | no                  | Mañjuśrīsthan<br>(Svayambhū) |
| 22          | BHĪMSEN<br>AṢṬAMĪ               | <u>pūjā</u> / <u>pūjā</u>                                         | Vajrācāryas<br>Brahman <u>pūjārīs</u>                                | yes                          | no                  | Bhīmsensthan                 |
| 23          | ŚIVA RĀTRI                      | none / <u>pūjā</u>                                                | Brahmans, Sādhus                                                     | none                         | no                  | Paśupati                     |
| 24          | HOLI                            | play / play                                                       | young men                                                            | none                         | wandering<br>groups | none                         |
| 25          | CAKAN DYA<br>Jātrā              | <u>pūjā</u> / rare<br>ceremony                                    | Pradhāns of Thamel,<br>Vajrācāryas of north<br>Kathmandu;            | yes                          | yes                 | none                         |
| 26.         | PAÑCHARE                        | <u>pūjā</u> / <u>pūjā</u><br>patron / patron<br>witness / witness | Vajrācāryas<br>Brahman <u>purohīts</u><br>Jyāpu <u>guṭhīs</u> , King | none                         | yes                 | none                         |
| 27.         | JANA BAHĀ<br>DYA RATHA<br>JĀTRĀ | <u>pūjā</u> / <u>pūjā</u><br>patronage / rare<br>pulling          | Bahā Sangha<br>Carpenter castes<br>Urāy <u>gurujuś</u>               | for <u>pūjās</u><br>chanting | Yes                 | none                         |
| 28.         | LHUTI PUṆHI                     | <u>pūjā</u> / <u>pūjā</u>                                         | Vajrācāryas, Brahmans<br>Tibetans, Tamangs                           | Yes                          | no                  | Jamacho<br>peak              |
| 29.         | MĀYĀ KṠĀ<br>SWAYEGU             | <u>pūjā</u> / <u>pūjā</u>                                         | Vajrācāryas, Brahmans                                                | none                         | no                  | <u>Mātā Tīrtha</u>           |
| 30.         | BUDDHA<br>JAYANTĪ               | <u>pūjā</u> / none<br>display<br>patron                           | Vajrācāryas, Tibetans<br>Theravādins                                 | Yes                          | Yes                 | Svayambhū                    |
| 31.         | SITHI NAKHA                     | <u>pūjā</u> / <u>pūjā</u>                                         | none                                                                 | none                         | Kumar Jātrā         | none                         |

## APPENDIX E: The Popular Cultural Media of Baha Buddhism

### SYMBOLIC MEDIA

The Directional Buddhas: at Svayambhu, on most small courtyard chaityas, and over every house entranceway, the cosmic order of the four Buddhas emanating from Vairocana is presented.

The Astamangala: The eight auspicious symbols: lotus, yak tails, fish, banner, umbrella, kalash, wheel, and endless knot are used to decorate Tuladhar entranceways and other auspicious places. The astamangala are also used in special rituals.

The SriDevi Yantra of two triangles is another common symbol found in baha woodwork, in house decoration, and in religious media.

### JATAKA/ AVADANA MEDIA

Buddha at Lumbini: The picture of Shakyamuni Buddha on his return to his birthplace, Lumbini. He is attended by Bhiksus, the great Hindu gods Siva, Brahma, and Vishnu, and a host of other lesser divinities. A widely known song in Newari describes the procession.

Mahasattva Raj Kumar: A Jataka story in which the prince bodhisattva gives his life out of compassion for a tigress and her starving cubs in a previous existence. This site is identified with the Namo Buddha shrine just outside the Kathmandu Valley and is visited as one of the major pilgrimage spots.

Manichuda: The story of the bodhisattva who as a king gives up a gem imbedded in his forehead in order to save the inhabitants of a distant country from an epidemic. As evidence of his perfection in giving, he makes this gift despite the fact of it killing him. The site of this event is thought by the Newars to have been a spot four hours walk north of Sankhu.

Singhasatabahu: The story of traders from Nepal led by the hero Singhasatabahu. After carelessly trampling on a stupa on their way, the party is shipwrecked and as a result they are allured by beautiful women who are in fact cannibalistic demonesses. Avalokitesvara intervees in the form of a golden horse, instructing the traders not to look back for to do so spells their ruin. All but Singhasatabahu look back. He later avenges the demonesses and becomes a noble king. Newars identify his palace as Vikramasila Mahavihara (ThamBahil) north of Asan Tol.

Vessantara: The Jataka story of the Bodhisattva who as king shows his perfect non-attachment by giving away all of his property and then his family to others.

### MEDIA FROM THE SVAYAMBHU PURANA

Manjusri and the Origin of the Kathmandu Valley: The origin of the Kathmandu Valley as described in the Svayambhu Purana: Manjusri opens up the mountainside at Chobar.

HariHariHariVahana Lokesvara: The myth in which Garuda gets into a fight with a naga; when the naga is about to win, Garuda invokes his protector, Vishnu; the naga then calls upon his lord, Avalokitesvara. All the celestial Bodhisattva appears, all of the other divinities then bow to Avalokitesvara. This is depicted in art with each deity surmounted on the other, with Avalokitesvara above all.

Luku Mahadya: The story of Siva who must flee a demon intent on destroying him and his flight to the refuse pit. Almost every

residential courtyard in Asan has this pit.

Shristikanta Lokesvara: The origin of the world according to Adi Buddha theory proceeded from Avalokitesvara being created as a manifestation of this Buddha. In turn, he created all of the gods of the world to rule in their respective domains. This theme is depicted in Newar art.

Ajima's conversion: The smallpox goddess Harati Ajima is converted by the Buddha. She gives up child killing and becomes a protector of the young-- if given offerings. She also agrees to protect the Buddhist shrines placed near her own and to protect children.

#### LOCAL HEROES AND DEMONS

Surat Vajra: The story of the great Vajracarya master of Ta Che Baha who gained fame in Tibet. His feats of tantric magic include putting out a fire in his baha --Asan's Ta Che Baha-- by throwing his teacup from Lhasa. After this, he returned to his home to discover that his family had thought him dead and performed all the the cremation rituals. For their stupidity, he cursed them to have a demented Vajracarya in their midst and returned to Tibet. Tuladhars tell this story as proof that once the Vajracaryas must have been great Buddhist masters.

Kes Chandra: The story of a former gambler who lost everything, including his wife's property and then her loyalty. After he ends up hungry, homeless, and alone, he is blessed with a divine gift in the form of pigeon droppings that turn to gold. Kes Chandra then reforms his ways after taming the Giant Gurumappa, who helps him carry away the loads of gold.

Basundhara Brata: A story of the good effects and worldly benefits of worshipping this goddess.

Note:

This dissertation was produced using DECmate I and II Word Processing Systems. Thanks to the Southern Asian Institute for access to these facilities.